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CONFERENCE SERMONS.

A

VOLUME OF SERMONS,

DESIGNED TO BE USED IN

RELIGIOUS MEETINGS,

WHEN THERE IS NOT PRESENT A

GOSPEL-MINISTER.

BY DANIEL A. CLARK, A. M.

LATE PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN AMHERST, MASS.

“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; but he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.” JER. XXIII. 28.

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” 1 COR. XIV. 8.



AMHERST, MASS.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY CARTER AND ADAMS,

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, *to wit*,

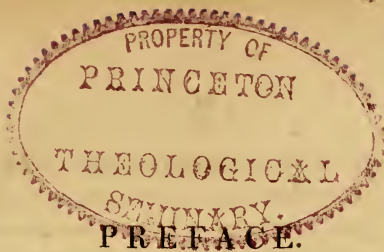
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L. S.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the Seventeenth day of December A. D. 1825, in the Fiftieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, DANIEL A. CLARK, A. M. of the said District has deposited in this Office the Title of a Book the right whereof he claims as Author in the words following, *to wit* : A Volume of Sermons, designed to be used in Religious Meetings, when there is not present a Gospel-Minister. By Daniel A. Clark, A. M. Late Pastor of the first Church in Amherst, Mass. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; but he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." Jer. xxiii. 28.—"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" 1 Cor. xiv. 8. In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times therein mentioned:" and also to an Act entitled "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving and Etching Historical and other Prints."

JOHN W. DAVIS.

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.



THE writer of this volume would say, to those who have encouraged, or may patronize its publication, that it is with great diffidence he has entered upon the work. Whether it is what you wished, or expected, you are now to judge. My hope is that God will make it useful. I feel disposed to take only a low place, among my brethren in the ministry, many of whom have yet committed few or none of their productions to the press, and am not conscious of any governing passion for authorship. Hence it may not be improper to give, in a few words, the history of my views, relative to this volume.

I have long believed, that sermons of a *distinguishing* character, and in a popular dress, having point, and pungency of application, are very much needed in the American churches. Most of the sermons printed are occasional, or if otherwise, being printed singly, and seldom collected into volumes, or extensively circulated, are quite out of reach. They have, on a limited scale, done great good, but most of them, however excellent, are at length consigned to neglect with waste papers.

Many *excellent volumes too*, have been published, and have edified the churches, and helped mature for heaven a multitude of believers; but which from their occasional, metaphysical, or exclusively doctrinal character, are judged unsuitable to be read in evening-meetings, to which so often, even good men, bring a mind, as well as a body, worn down with fatigue; and need, for their edification, some repast that can hold their powers waking. Discourses adapted to such an occasion, which must often be read badly to a dull audience, must have poured into them, all the novelty, vivacity, force, and pungency possible. The truth should be condensed, and the doctrines exhibited in that practical shape, that shall tend to keep, up through every paragraph, a deep and lively interest.

To supply such a volume, though perhaps a bold attempt, has been my aim ; but whether I have attained, or even *approached* the point, others will now judge. I think there is here a chasm that needs to be filled, and if I should induce some of our ablest clergymen, to employ their talents in *accomplishing*, what I have *attempted*, I shall I hope feel myself richly rewarded for the trouble and expense of publishing this volume.

I am prepared to say that a *score* of volumes, *such as I intended this should be*, is wanted ; and have yet to learn that the churches would not sustain the expense of their publication. And although it is deeply to be regretted, that so many precious volumes, read by the people of God, in days past, and used by the Spirit in fitting them for heaven, have from something obsolete in their language, gone too much out of use, yet as the fact exists, a remedy should be applied. The multitude of books in the market, is no argument against the attempt to furnish the ungodly with the means of alarm, or the people of God, with any help that can be afforded them, in finishing their sanctification. In every other department of learning, new efforts are perpetually made, and every fascination of style and argument employed, to render interesting the art or science that it is feared may languish ; and why not carry the same wisdom into the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have given the volume as great a variety, as was consistent with my original design, and hope no one of the discourses will be found wholly unsuitable for the use intended. The twelfth, though it may seem to have been written exclusively for the benefit of ministers, was in fact designed rather for their people, to aid them in discovering, whether the ministry placed over them be correct, and faithful ; and to prepare them to treat tenderly, and aid promptly, by every means in their power, the true ambassador of Christ, in his arduous, and responsible, but pleasant and honourable calling. And the minister of the gospel, often pressed with labour, may wish, in some of his little meetings, to read a sermon to his people, and may find this one not unprofitable to himself or his people.

I sincerely hope, that some of the worthy ministers of New England, whose praise is in the churches, will give the public a few volumes of their sermons, and not leave this department of christian instruction, to be exclusively occupied by posthumous publications, which some worthy friend, with the best motives possible, but under great disadvantages, shall collect from unrevised manuscripts, often with not the best success, either as it regards the reputation of the author, or the usefulness of the book.

I have only to add my wish and my prayer, that the great Head of the church, may bless to all my readers this attempt to build them up in the most holy faith ; and to ask their prayers, that my labour may not be in vain in the Lord.

I am, Christian brethren,

Yours affectionately, in the

Bonds of the Gospel,

DANIEL A. CLARK.

AMHERST, MASS. JAN. 2, 1826.

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THE CHURCH SAFE.

ISAIAH XLIX. 16.

*"I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands ; thy walls
are continually before me."*

THE Jewish church, during her captivity, would be led to conceive that God had forsaken, and forgotten her. To effectually remove this impression, God by his prophet appeals to one of the tenderest relationships of life. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Thus would he give to Zion, assurance of his unchangeable love. His people should multiply, till the land, where their foes destroyed them, should be too limited for their increased population. Kings and nations should serve them, and do them honour. Zion was dear to him as the apple of his eye. He would engrave her upon the palms of his hands; her walls should be continually before him.

In those days, it was the custom to paint upon the palms of the hands such objects as men wished to remember, in allusion to which custom God assures his people, that he had graven Zion upon

the palms of his hands. Thus should her walls be continually before him ; he would not forget her a moment, nor suffer any foe to injure her. We have here a broad and sacred pledge, to be kept in mind by the people of God in all ages, and plead in their prayers, that he will foster and bless his church, and will employ his vigilance and his power to secure her safety, and advance her honours.

Thus is *The church safe*, and the people of God need have no apprehensions, nor weep a tear, but over their own transgressions, and the miseries of that multitude, who will not be persuaded to take sanctuary in her bosom. I shall argue the safety of the church, from *the firmness and stability of the divine operations*, From what God *has already done* for his church, What he *is now doing*, and What he *has promised to do*.

I. We assure ourselves, that the church is safe, *From the firmness and stability of the divine operations*. I now refer, not merely to the unchangeableness of God, which will lead him to pursue for ever that plan which his infinite wisdom devised ; for that plan lies concealed from us ; but to that uniform and steady course with which he has pursued every enterprise which his hands have begun. That he is of the same mind, and that none can turn him, is a *thought* full of comfort ; but that he has finished every work which he took in hand, is a *fact*, which intelligences have witnessed, and one on which we may found our richest expectations.

The worlds which he began to build he finished. Not one was left half formed and motionless. Each he placed in its orbit, gave it light, and laws, and impulse. And ever since this first development of the divine stability, the wheels of Providence have rolled on with steady and settled course. What Omnipotence began, whether to create or to destroy, he rested not till he had accomplished.

When he had become incensed with our world, and purposed its desolation, with what a firm and steady step did he go on to achieve his purpose. Noah builds the ark, and God prepares the fountains, which, at his word, burst from their entrenchments to drown an impious generation.

How have suns kept their stations, and planets rolled in their orbits, by the steady pressure of the hand of God ; by their revolutions measuring out the years of their own duration, and by their velocity urging on the amazing moment when they shall meet in dread concussion, and perish in the contact. How fixed their periods, their risings, their eclipses, their changes, and their transits. And while they roll, how uniform is the return of spring, summer, autumn and winter. How certain every law of matter, gravitation, attraction, reflection, &c. The very comet, so long considered lawless, how is it curbed and reined in its eccentric orbit, and never yet had power or permission to burn a single world.

How sure is the fulfilment of prophecy. Ages intervening cannot shake the certainty of its ac-

complishment. Jesus bleeds on Calvary four thousand years subsequently to the promise which that event accomplishes. Cyrus is named in the page of prophecy more than two hundred years before his birth, and at the destined moment becomes the Lord's shepherd, collects the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and builds Jerusalem. The Jews, as prophets three thousand years ago foretold, are yet in exile. The weeping prophet, now at rest, still sees the family he loved peeled and scattered, and the soil that drank his tears, cursed for their sins ; and confident that God is true, waits impatient the certain, but distant year of their redemption.

Wretches that dare his power, God will not disturb his plan to punish. The old world flourished one hundred and twenty years after heaven had cursed that guilty race. Sodom was a fertile valley long after the cry of its enormities had entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth. The Amorites were allowed five hundred years to fill up the measure of their iniquity after God had pledged their land to Abram, although Israel wore away the intervening years in bondage. Many a murderer has been overtaken by the hand of justice, half a century past the time of the bloody deed. God will punish all the workers of iniquity, but he waits till the appointed moment. Like the monarch of the forest, he comes upon his enemies, conscious of his strength, with steady but dreadful steps. In his

movements there is neither frenzy, passion, nor haste. While his judgments linger, his enemies ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" but let them know, that he has appeared, and descomfited many a foe; and the inference is that *they* must perish too. Whatever God begins, he finishes: no unseen embarrassment can turn his eye from his original purpose.

Now the argument is, that as God has begun to erect a church, he will act in this matter as in all others. If one of light character, a man given to change, had laid the foundation of some mansion, there would still be doubt whether it would ever receive its top-stone. But suppose his character exactly the reverse, and the moment he brakes the ground imagination sees the mansion finished: now only make God the builder and the argument is perfect. Whether we can trace his footsteps or not, he moves on to the accomplishment of his purpose with undeviating course. Every event, in aspect bright or dark, promotes the ultimate increase and establishment of his church. Or shall this be the only enterprise to which his wisdom, his power, or his grace, is inadequate? In this solitary instance shall he begin to build and not be able to finish? What would be thought of him in hell, if the mystical temple should never receive its top-stone? Its fires may go out, the worm may die, or some infernal genius bridge the gulph. Heaven too would lose all confidence in its King, and every harp be silent.

Thus before we examine the history of the church, or read the promises, if we believe that God ever had a church, we have the strongest possible *presumptive* evidence, that he will watch her interests, will feed the fires upon her altars, will bring her sons from far, and her daughters from the ends of the earth, and will never leave her, nor forsake her. "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands ; thy walls are continually before me."

II. Our expectations brighten when we see what God *has done* for his church. My first argument went to show, that if God had only laid the corner stone of this heavenly building, it would rise and be finished. We are now to view the building half erected, and from what *has been done* argue the certainty of its completion. The church has been under the fostering care of heaven too long to be abandoned now.

Let us retrace for a moment a few pages of her history, and we shall see that when the church was low, he raised her ; when she was in danger, he saved her. Amid all the moral desolations of the old world, the church never became extinct. And he at length held the winds in his fist, and barred the fountains of the deep, till Noah could build the ark, and the church be housed from the storm.

How wonderful were his interpositions when the church was embodied in the family of Abraham ! In redeeming her from Egyptian bondage how did he open upon that guilty land all the embrasures of

heaven, till they thrust out his people. And he conducted them to Canaan by the same masterly hand. The sea divided, and Jordan rolled back its waters; the rock became a pool, and the heavens rained them bread, till they drank at the fountains, and ate the fruits of the land of promise. Their garments lasted forty years, and the angel Jehovah, in a cloud of light, led them through the labyrinths and dangers of the desert.

When the church diminished, and her prospects clouded over, he raised up reformers. Such were Samuel, and David, and Hezekiah, and Josiah, and Daniel, and Ezra, and Nehemiah: such were all the prophets. Each in his turn became a master-builder, and the temple rose, opposition notwithstanding.

Again under the apostles how did her prospects brighten. In three thousand hearts, under a single sermon, commenced the process of sanctification. The very cross proved an engine to erect her pillars; the flames lighted her apartments, and the blood of the martyrs cemented the walls of her temple, and contributed to its strength and beauty. Every dying groan alarmed the prince of hell, and shook the pillars of his dreary domain.

But the church again sunk, and hell presumed that her ruin would be soon achieved, when the sixteenth century lifted upon her the dawn of hope. In Luther, Calvin, Melancthon and Zuinglius, her interests found able advocates. They appeared at

the very juncture when the sinking church needed their courage and their prayers. Like some mighty constellation, which bursts from the east at the hour of midnight, they rose when moral darkness was almost total, and like that of Egypt could seem to be felt. By their aid the church emerged from the wilderness. By their courage her grand enemy was made to tremble on his ghostly tribunal. The power of the Pope had then outgrown the strength of every civil arm. Every monarch in Europe was at his feet. Till Luther rose no power could cope with him. There was a true church, but she had no champion. The followers of Jesus paid for the privilege of discipleship with their blood. He who dared to be guided by his own conscience, committed an offence that could not be pardoned. The heavenly minded saw no relief but in death, and thirsted for the honour of a martyrdom that would place them in a world where conscience might be free. But God appeared and redeemed his people. —The theme is pleasant, but time would fail me to rehearse what God has done for his church. Every age has recorded the interpositions of his mercy; and every land where there is a remnant of his church, bears some monument that tells to his honour, and which will endure till the funeral of the world.

Now the argument is, that he who has done so much for his church will never abandon her. If he would float her above a drowning world, would re-

deem her from bondage, would escort her through the desert, would rain her bread from heaven, would reprove kings for her sake, would stop the sun to aid her victories; with his smiles, light the glooms of her dungeon, and by his presence cool the fires of the stake, there can be no fear for her safety.

God *will do* just such things for Zion as he *has done*. "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be." His arm is not shortened, nor his ear heavy. The church was never nearer his heart than *now*. And he now hates her enemies as really as he did Pharaoh, Sennacherrib, Nero, or Julian. He then governed the world for the sake of his church; and for her sake he governs it still, "The Lord's portion is his people." We know not that he ever had but one object in view in the events that have transpired in our world; and that one, the honour of his name in the redemption of his people: and this object sways his heart still. The destruction of the enemy is a part of the same plan. Still may the church invoke the Lord God of Elijah, may rest under the protection of the God of Bethel, and wrestle with the Angel of Penue! If she should be in bondage, there will rise another Moses, another cloud will conduct her out of Egypt, and the same heavens will rain her manna. If darkness should overshadow her, there will be found among the sons she hath brought up, another Luther, Calvin, or Knox, to take her by the hand,

to protect her honours, and recruit her strength. Shame on the Christian who knows her history, and yet is afraid. Afraid of what? That God will cease to defend the apple of his eye? Afraid that the city graven upon the palms of his hands, may be captured and destroyed? If God continue to do such things as he *has done*, the church with all her retinue is safe. "God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

III. God *is* doing *now* just such things as he has done. We saw laid the corner stone, and drew thence our *first* argument. Then we saw the building half erected, and were furnished with a *second*. We are now to view the edifice covered with builders, and from their exertions derive our *third*. We may now reason from things that our eyes can see. We may appeal for testimony to the very saw and hammer, and make the scaffold speak.

It may be that some who are present are not sensible in what a day of heavenly exploit they live. Do you know what amazing events are transpiring? Have you learned, that Bible Societies are forming in every part of Christendom, and that the Scriptures are now read in perhaps a hundred languages, in which, till lately, not a text of inspired truth was ever written? Do you know that the late editions of God's word have commenced their circulation, are traversing the desert, taming the savage, and

pouring celestial light on eyes that never met its beams before ?

Do you know the prevalence of a missionary spirit ? Have you learned, that youth of the first character, of the fairest prospect, and of both sexes, aspire to be missionaries of the cross ? Some have gone, and others wait impatient till your charity shall send them.

Many a mother has devoted her daughter to the work, and waits for opportunity to give her the parting kiss ; and many a daughter, on whom has fallen Harriet's mantle, aches to visit her tomb, and rest under the same turf till Jesus bid them rise. And what daughter of Zion is not ambitious of a martyrdom like her's ?

How numerous and extensive the revivals, which at present we witness in our land ! Even where there is no stated ministry, the showers of grace descend, and the waste places are made fertile. What other page of the church's history, but the present, could record an almost universal concert of prayer ? Christians of every continent employing the same hour in the same supplications ! How unparalleled the success of every Christian enterprise ! No plan of mercy fails. The active Christian is amazed at the result of his own exertions.

Much that God is *now doing* is evidently preparatory to *future operations*. Bible and missionary societies may be viewed as the accumulated energies of the church. Hitherto our exertions have

been insulated and feeble. The little streams fructified the plains through which they flowed, but could easily be dammed or evaporated; but their junction has formed a mighty river, destined to penetrate every moral desert, and carry fertilization to every province of our desolated world: fed with the showers of heaven, and every day flowing on with deeper and broader channel, the wilds of Arabia, the heaths of Africa, and the plains of Siberia can oppose no effectual barrier to its influence.

What age but ours was ever blessed with Theological Seminaries, where might, be reared at the expense of charity, young evangelists, to go out and carry the bread of life to a starving world? Fortunes, collected for other purposes, are poured into the treasury of the Lord, and thus are erected batteries to demolish the strong holds of the prince of hell. Jehovah bless their founders!

Churches and congregations, who, in seasons of coldness, grudged to support the gospel at home, are now equipping young men for the missionary field, and for their own edification. And it has at length become so disreputable to stand idle in these matters, that the man who would save his money, feels himself in danger of losing his character.

Not long since, young men of piety and talents, who longed to fight the battles of the Lord, must equip themselves, and then find poor support in the service. But the scale is turned. Where there is no fortune but piety, a thirst for knowledge, and a

talent to improve, the way is now open to all the honours of the camp of Israel. The pious mother, who can only drop her two mites into the treasury of the Lord, but whose example and whose prayers have saved her son, may bring her Samuel to the altar, to be fed from its offerings, and reared to all the honours of the prophetic office. While I am yet speaking, hope springs up, and a joy, not felt in ages past, thrills through all the habitations of pious poverty.

The late revivals possess one peculiar characteristic. There have been among there fruits an unusual number of males. When there was little else that could be done for Zion, but pray and weep, and love her doctrines, and glow with heavenly affections, the *feebler sex* could furnish the christian world with soldiers. But now, when the kingdom of darkness must be stormed, Zion needs the aid of her *sons*, and God, it would seem, accommodates the operations of his Spirit to the interests of his church. Paul was not converted till his help was needed, and it was not needed till the gospel was to be carried to the Gentiles. Every revival of late contradicts that libel long legible on the records of infidelity, *That religion evinces its emptiness by its exclusive operation upon the feebler part of our race*. Recently the strong and muscular, the very champions of the host of hell, have fallen before the power of truth, and are harnessed for its defence. Moreover, men of science, and of strong mind, have in their own es-

teem become fools, and have sat down to learn truth at a Saviour's feet. Our late revivals have penetrated schools and colleges. Satan's cause has been well pleaded, and God now intends to plead his own : and palsied will be the tongue that is silent.

Does God without design raise up these instruments ? Would one pass through a whole kingdom, and employ every skilful mechanic, unless he intended to erect some mighty edifice ? If then we see God enlisting *men* in his service, *men of strength and science*, does he not intend to achieve some wondrous design ? Assuredly the heavenly building will rise. These talents will be, and they are already employed in extending Emmanuel's empire. India, with other benighted lands, has already received our missionaries, and her Moloch, with all his cursed family of gods, sicken at their prospect. The dark places of his empire have been explored, and the sceptre begins to tremble in his palsied hand. And poor Africa, more debased still, has found a tongue to plead her cause. Conscience, long asleep, and deaf to her rights, has waked, and now, her sons, fed at the table of charity, are preparing to carry her the bread of life. My country, deeper in her debt than all other lands, has begun to pay its long arrears.

Who could have hoped, a few years since, that he should ever see a day like this ? If twenty years since, one had told me that *sixty* years would so electrify the Christian world, I should have believed him visionary, and, like the unbelieving Samar-

itan, should have pronounced it impossible, unless God should make windows in heaven, and rain Bible and Missionary Societies from above : but God has done it all without a miracle. And blessed be his name,—will those present join me in the thank-offering?—blessed be his name, that he cast us upon such an age as this. Blessed be his name, that we were not born a century sooner. Then we had never seen the dawn of this millennial morning, nor heard the glad tidings which now reach us by every mail, nor had an opportunity, as now, to purchase for our offspring an interest in the Lord's fund. Charity was then in a deep sleep. India bowed to her idols, and Africa wore her chains, unpitied and unrelieved. Buchanan and Wilberforce, angels of mercy, were then unborn. Infidelity then desolated the fairest provinces of Christendom, and wars were the applauded achievements of states and empires.

But the age of infidelity has gone by, and the bloody clarion has breathed out, I hope, its last accursed blast. Events are transpiring which bid fair to bind all nations in the bonds of love. I had *read* of such a period, but how could I hope to *see* it? The present repose of nations augurs well for the Church. Christendom can now unite her efforts to evangelize the world, while the sailor and the soldier have leisure and opportunity to read the precious Scriptures. And must not all this put our unbelief to the blush, and cover us with shame?

The past twenty years have so outdone our highest hopes, as to render it impossible to predict what twenty more may do. God has begun to work on a scale *new* and *grand*; and the inference is that he will go on. After what we have seen, we could hardly be surprised if twenty years to come should put the bible into every language under heaven, and should send missionaries, more or less, to every benighted district of earth. Let benevolent exertion increase in the ratio of the past seven years, and God add his blessing, and half a century will evangelize the world, tame the lion and the asp, and set every desert with temples, devoted to the God of heaven. When the bosom of charity shall beat a little stronger, if there should be the necessity, men will sell houses or farms to save the heathen from hell, and the child will sit down and weep, who may not say, that his father and mother were the friends of missions. And what parent would entail such a curse upon his children, and prevent them from lifting up their heads in the millennium. I had rather leave mine toiling in the ditch, there to enjoy the luxury of reflecting, that a father's charity made them poor. Poor! They are poor who cannot feel for the miseries of a perishing world; whom God has given abundance, but who grudge to use it for his honour. Teach your children charity, and they can never be poor. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself." Can

this promise fail? Then we can all leave our children rich, and the heirs too of a fortune they can never squander. We can purchase for them the privilege of drawing upon the exhaustless resources of heaven. What a privilege now to be a *parent*!

But I must return to the argument. God is doing so much for his church, as to warrant the inference that he will do still more. The hopes he raises, he will gratify. The prayer he indites, he will answer. To see what God is doing, I find it impossible to doubt his intentions. The present is a prelude to brighter scenes. God would not have done so much for his people, had he intended to abandon them. The church will live and prosper. Instead of trembling for the ark, let us weep that we ever thought it in danger.

IV. We build the same expectations on the *promises* and *prophecies*. The building which we see rising God has promised to finish. He has all the materials; the silver and the gold are his. He has enlisted the builders, and prepared the necessary instruments. The decree has gone forth that Jerusalem must be built, and God will redeem his own gratuitous pledge: he will do as he has said.

Early in the reign of Emmanuel there will be universal peace. The nations are to "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the

kid." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all" God's "holy mountain." "They shall sit, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid."

But "the gospel must first be published among all nations." On this promise there pours at present a stream of heavenly light. The angel "having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth," is beginning to publish it "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Kings are to be to the church nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers: and they have already taken hold of the work with interest. Their charity, their influence, and their prayers, have already contributed to deepen and widen the channel of that river which is making glad the city of God. In the progress of this work a nation shall be born in a day. The instance of Eimeo may be considered as embraced in this promise. "Thy watchmen shall see eye to eye." This promise has commenced its accomplishment in the harmony manifested in the formation and support of Sabbath schools, and bible and missionary societies. The Jews are to return to their land, and to the God of their fathers. There shines some light upon this promise. Many are at present migrating to Palestine from the north of Europe, some have been converted to the faith of Jesus, many not converted are members of Bible societies, and exertions unparalleled are making to bring them to the light, while individuals of their

number are proclaiming to their deluded brethren, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Soon the Bible will supplant the Talmud.

“Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” Who does not see this promise fast accomplishing? Her chains are falling, and her mind expanding. There have commenced a train of operations that promise the richest blessings to the children of Ham. Soon the Gambia, the Niger, and the Nile will grace their shores with christian temples, will lend their waters to fertilize a gospel land, and bear to his station the zealous missionary. In the mean time the wretched Arab, exchanging his Koran for the Bible, and tamed by its influence to honest industry, will settle the quarrel with the family of Jacob, and worship in the same temple.

If we turn to the threatenings against the enemies of the church, there open before us large fields of promise. Like the cloud that severed Pharaoh’s hosts from Israel, they pour impenetrable darkness into the camp of the enemy, while they light the tents of Jacob. “The day of the Lord shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh, shall burn them up, saith the Lord; that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Perhaps the complicated miseries which began in the French revolution, and were finished at Waterloo, might commence the accomplishment of this threatening. But doubtless other storms will yet beat upon the camp

of the enemy, more tremendous than any thing which they have yet experienced. Some believe that the fifth vial has not yet been poured out upon the seat of the beast; and all agree that the forty and two months, during which the holy city must be trodden under foot, are not yet expired. It is acknowledged that the period is twelve hundred and sixty years, and that it commenced with the reign of the beast, and will probably terminate in the present century. Possibly our dear children may live to see the precious moment that shall close the period. Then the messenger of the covenant shall make his glorious ingress, shall destroy his enemies, shall purify the sons of Levi, and cleanse the offering of Judah. Then the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. Jesus shall take possession of the inheritance promised, "and his dominion shall be from sea, even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Can the dejected christian *read* all this, and *believe* it all, and despondingly weep still? And for what does he weep? God has begun to erect a heavenly temple; the work has never stopt, and he promises that it never shall. He never did abandon any work which he began, nor did there ever drop from his lips a promise that was not, or will not be fulfilled. And what more can he do? Christian, you may weep on, but let your tears be tears of penitence or joy. Every harp should be snatched from the willows, new joys should be felt, and new anthems sung

in all the assemblies of the saints. He that *shall* come, *will* come, and will not tarry; and every bosom should respond, "Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

APPLICATION.

1. If to any it is a burden to join in the general concert of prayer for Zion's increase, they can excuse themselves, and the glorious work will still go on. There are those who consider the duty a privilege. If the church could live without them, and duty did not prompt them to pray, they would weep to be denied the privilege of bearing her interests to the throne, and of waiting for the redemption of Israel. Such may wait still upon the Lord, and may wait with confidence, that every prayer will be answered, every tear preserved, and every hope accomplished. But are there those who would wish to be excused from this service? who have no pleasure in the duty, and no faith in the promises? Well, they can act their pleasure, and the church will live. But, whether such will have any share in the glories of that kingdom, whose approach they dread, "demands a doubt."

2. If any grudge to contribute of their wealth, for the advancement of the church, they can withhold. If they have a better use for their money, or dare not trust the Lord, there is no compulsion. *Some happy beings* will have the honour of the work. It

is to be accomplished by the instrumentality of men, and if any are willing to be excused, and insist on doing nothing, they can use their pleasure. And if such would ruin their children, by holding them back, they can. They can form them to such habits that the world will never be disturbed by their munificence. They can prejudice them against all the operations of christian charity; can make them deaf to the cry of the six hundred millions; can keep them ignorant of what the christian world is doing, and what God has commanded *them* to do. And there can then be very little doubt but they will have children in their own likeness. But whether God will not finally lay claim to their wealth, and cause it to be expended in beautifying his holy empire, we dare not assert. The silver and the gold are his.

But the work will go on. *Once* our fears on the subject were great. We doubted whether the christian world would ever give the heathen the gospel. But our fears are removed. We have now no apprehension as to the issue, and can only pity those who are blind to their duty, their interest, their honour, and their happiness.

3. If any are willing to remain out of the kingdom of Christ, they can act their pleasure in this matter too, and yet the marriage supper will be full. The kingdom of Christ will be large enough; large as he expected, large as he desired, large as the Father

promised ; large enough to gratify the infinite benevolence of his heart. If any do not wish to live in heaven, the mansions they might have filled will be occupied by others. The celestial choir will be full, and the name of Jesus will receive its deserved applauses from the myriads who shall be redeemed from every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

If sinners can do without God, he can do without them. They will not be forced reluctantly to the marriage supper of the Lamb. There will be enough who will come willingly. Heaven will be as happy as it would be if more were saved. And the prison of despair will contain exactly that number, whose ruin will exhibit to the best advantage the character of Jehovah: and the smoke of their torment, which shall ascend up for ever and ever, will form a stupendous column on which will be written, legible to all heaven, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, TRUTH.

The vast accession made to the church in the late revivals, and the still greater increase in the future years of millennial glory, will swell the number of the saved beyond all calculation. Sinners who now join the multitude, and are thus secured from present reproach, will soon find themselves attached to an insignificant and despicable minority. It would seem at present that the number of the lost will be great, but you may multiply them beyond the power of human enumeration, and still there is no fear but the number of the saved will be greater.

If any, then, would prefer to remain out of the

kingdom, they have their choice, and the shame and ruin will be their own. God intends to let them do as they please, and those who love his kingdom most, anxious as they now are for the salvation of their fellow men, will at last be satisfied with the number of the saved. We invite none to become the subjects of Christ's kingdom, but those who will esteem his yoke easy, and his burden light.

4. If any should be disposed to enter into league with the lost angels, and oppose the church, they can do so, and still the church will live. Earth and hell united, can make no effectual opposition to her interests. God is in the midst of his people, and will help them, and that right early. In these circumstances, one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.

Some opposition is necessary to awaken her energies. Solomon was seven years building the first temple, when all was peace; but Ezra, with the trowel in one hand, and the sword in the other, could build the second in four. The enemy has always promoted the interest he wished to destroy. God will make the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. If any would make opposition to the growing interests of Emmanuel, they can; but they will accomplish their own ruin, and perhaps the ruin of their children. It never was so dangerous as now to be the enemy of Christ's kingdom. All such must be crushed under

the wheels of that car, in which the Son of God is riding in triumph through a conquered empire. To make opposition is as unavailing as if a fly should make an effort to stop the sun. There await the enemies of the cross, certain defeat, shame, and ruin. "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall come down upon his own pate." In the mean time the church is safe. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

5. Fathers and Brethren in the ministry, this subject will raise your hopes. Are you stationed where it is all darkness around you, and have the hosts of hell alarmed you? cheer up your hearts. Try to penetrate the surrounding darkness, and you will soon be convinced that your fears are ill-timed. Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. If night does seem to hover about us, still is it manifest that the day has dawned upon the hills. The church has never been in danger, and we ought to be ashamed of our fears. Be at your watch-tower, dear brethren; turn your eye to the east, and you will soon descry the light. If there is any truth in the promise, and if a thousand transpiring events can speak, we shall soon have opportunity to hail Emmanuel at his second coming. If our courage fails us in a day like this, we have only to lie down and die with shame. While the victory was doubtful, you might

be afraid, and yet save your character, but none are afraid now but the coward. Shall we hesitate to die if necessary in securing a victory already gained ; and to gain which the Captain of our salvation, and many of his soldiers have spilt their blood ? Our missionary brethren have carried the standard of the cross, and planted it within the entrenchments of the enemy, and their courage has not failed ; and shall we tremble in the camp ? We shall then have no share in the spoil. Dear brethren, I will not insult you ; you are not afraid ; you will die at your post, and the victory will be secured.

6. Dear Christian Brethren, you see the royal canopy which your Lord casts over your heads ; or rather the shield he spreads before you. If you are not officers in the camp of Israel, you are soldiers ; if you may not command, you may fight, but not with carnal weapons. Let the subject raise your courage. A few more conflicts and your toils are ended ; the church is safe, and you are safe. Only believe, and soon you will see the salvation of God. And as the Saviour approaches, and you see him, you may say with the prophet, “ Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him, and he will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

SERMON 2.



THE ONLY TRUE GOD.

JOHN XVII. 3.

“ This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God.”

IN the report of that gospel, that shall deal honestly with dying men, it is of the first importance, that there be exhibited the true character of God. As men are to be sanctified through the truth, it will be confessed, that no truth can be of higher importance, than that which relates to the being and attributes of Jehovah. Unless on this point there is made a full and clear exposure of the truth, our religion may be so defective, as to neither profit us in this life, nor save us in the life to come. Under the very names that belong to the true God, we may worship an idol, and thus give our depravity the shape of the grossest insult.

We have sometimes listened to a loud and earnest address on the subject of religion, and it professed itself the gospel, in which the character of the true God was industriously concealed. Men may speak of God, and with much engagedness; his adorable names may swell every clause, and round every period, and the whole be uttered with

a decent and well-bred softness ; and one may suppose himself religiously employed, in hearing the true gospel, and be charmed with the changes rung upon the names he has been accustomed to adore ; and still the god proclaimed may not be the blessed Jehovah. There may be a view exhibited that does not belong to the Creator, but to some imaginary god created for the occasion.

The text would furnish *several* topics of remark, but I intend to confine myself to *one*, *To expose some of the false views of God, which are not unfrequently presented us under the appellation of the gospel ;* and thus illustrate the character of that *only true God* whom to know is eternal life.

I. There is sometimes an extolling of all the more *clement* attributes of God, as some have presumptuously distinguished, while the *severer* attributes are unnoticed. The design of these declaimers seems to be, that our attention be fixed exclusively upon what, in their estimation, is *soft* and *mild* and *lovely* in God, while his *holiness*, his *justice* and his *truth* ;—all in him that can go to make a sinner afraid, or beget conviction and repentance, is industriously concealed. God's compassion for our lost and miserable world, his patience, his endurance, his long-suffering, his promptness to pardon, and total aversion to destroy ;—all those features of the divine mind, that can sooth alarm, are early and industriously developed, as if embracing the

whole of God that he himself loves, or man is required to worship and adore ; while the other parts of the divine image are obscured, as one would hide the scars and excrescences that have fortuitously covered more than half his visage. Thus the great luminary of the moral world must be cast into a deep and dark eclipse, that the naked eye of sense may gaze upon his few remaining glories. It is feared, we presume, that were the whole character of God exhibited, sinners would be filled with disgust, and be driven from the bosom of their Sovereign. He must not adhere to the principles of that law he has promulgated, nor care to vindicate himself from the aspersions that sinners have cast upon his character and his government. He must not resolve that mercy and truth meet together ; and that righteousness and peace kiss each other. He must cast a smile upon the prodigal, ere he shall turn his face or his feet toward his father's house. Thus must the holy and righteous God, before whom devils tremble, melt down into the weak and pitiful parent, or not one of his apostate family shall come back to his bosom and his service.—So men would judge.

But God seems to have had other views, and has revealed his whole character, fearless of the predicted consequences. If there was any danger from a full exposure of his character, why did he not hold himself concealed, or throw into the shade, as men would do for him, those parts of his character that must give offence. If that be good policy which I am

venturing to expose, God could have directed that neither the works of creation, nor the bible, should have told us the whole truth respecting himself. He might have suppressed the history of that revolt in heaven, and its results, and told us nothing of hell and the judgment, nor named in his book those attributes that throw around him such an atmosphere of darkness and terror. He need not have given us, if he had so pleased, the stories of the deluge, and of Sodom, and of Korah and his company. But God has exposed the whole truth, and that in the very book which he has directed should be our daily companion.

If the scheme I oppose be true, I know not how to account for such a bible as God has put into our hands, just calculated to betray a secret that should not have been divulged for worlds. If there belong to God any attributes that were not intended to be made known to sinners till they are reconciled to him; if they cannot safely be told that he is angry with the wicked every day, has appointed a time and place of judgment, and prepared a deep and dark perdition for the condemned: if they are to be urged to come to him, expecting to find him all mercy; then by what alarming oversight have we resolved to put the bible into the hands of sinners? Must the parental character of God so dazzle and fill the eye, as to eclipse the Sovereign, and the Judge, the Abettor of truth, and the Avenger of wrong and of outrage? And must we never know the whole character of

God, till we have to deal with him in the judgment? Can we be sure that the prodigal, after he has been thus decoyed home to his father's house, will be pleased with his father? Had he not better know, while away in his land of exile, exactly the father he must meet, and the father he must love, and stay there till this character is approved?

I know not where in the whole bible we are authorised, to elevate one attribute of God above another, and term the one *mild* and the other *severe*. I know not where men have learned, that there are principles in the divine nature and government, that to be fully known would subvert the benevolent design of the gospel. If God has thus instructed any of his ministers, and they act by his authority in deciding what *may* and what *may not* be developed to the world of the ungodly, I have only to say, "To their own master they stand or fall."

II. There is perhaps some occasion to fear, that some have gone into the opposite extreme, and have presented exclusively the more *forbidding* attributes of God, while his *grace* and *mercy* have been in this case too much concealed. When Jehovah is exhibited as constituted of entire sovereignty; as doing his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, without the least regard to the happiness and the salvation of his creatures; as casting after the wayward and the lost, no look of compassionate tenderness;—can this

be a faithful exhibition of the character of God ? Should it be said, That God is willing to show his wrath, and that he has created intelligent beings on purpose that they might be the vessels of his wrath ; and has communicated positive hardness to their hearts, because they did not render themselves depraved enough for his purpose ; and pushed them on to a character, that would be sufficiently desperate for some deed of darkness, which he had resolved they should perpetrate ;—would one gather from all this the true character of God ? I know that I have now presented an extreme case, and sincerely hope that not often, perhaps never, is sovereignty presented quite so bare and forbidding, and the truth pushed to an extremity so cold and cheerless. The objection to such presentations is, that they do not exhibit the whole character of God. He is willing to show his wrath, only where his mercy in Jesus Christ has been long and obstinately rejected. He created intelligent beings for his own glory, and will honour himself in their perdition, if by rejecting the Saviour, they count themselves unworthy of eternal life. He has hardened their hearts by the very dispensations that should have won them to duty and to God ; has sent them strong delusions that they might believe a lie and be damned, when they did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. We must pour into these strong exhibitions of truth, in order to render them the gospel, and make them useful, the *whole* character of God.

How can you hope to persuade rebels to submit themselves to this bare and appalling sovereignty? Why must they become reconciled to their Creator, before they may even know, that he is a God of mercy, or has it in his heart to bestow pardons? An apostle has said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I am not without my fears, that on this side of the line of orthodoxy there has sometimes been presented a character of God, as imperfect, not to say as unsafe, as when only his *clemency* is seen. And who can say that God would not be as unwilling, that one set of his attributes should be exclusively presented, as another? Under neither have we a full and honest portrait of the only true God, whom to know is eternal life. While the one error will lead unregenerate men to presume, that they love their Maker, so under the other it is feared, that many true believers may be kept all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of perdition. The one will make a multitude of happy hypocrites, while the other will conduct to heaven whole churches of trembling, doubting believers. The one will widen the fold, till the sheep and the goats can herd together; the other will contract it till many of the lambs must lie without, and be exposed to storms and beasts of prey; and finally neither presents correctly the character of God.

III. We have sometimes presented us a picture

of *warring* attributes. Mercy triumphs over justice, and grace is made victorious over truth and righteousness. Under this system, God disapproves the properties of his own nature, and the principles of his own government ; and contrives to defeat and nulify his own decrees. He issued his law, and pronounced it good, and made in it no provision for pardon, none he could make ; and when the sinner broke that law, he passed sentence, and threatened its execution. But he is now made to repent of the sternness, and integrity, and purity, that dictated that law, and uttered that sentence, and threatened its execution ; and is *reresolved*, that, come what will of reproach upon his name, and injury to his government and kingdom, the sinner shall not suffer. He built a place of torment, and seperated it from heaven by a bottomless gulf, and made it a dark, and dreary, and desolate abode ; but he has since had better and milder views ; has decreed that ultimately the gulf shall become passable, the fires shall go out, and the worm shall die.

And all this is contrived to save the divine honour. To let God be what he is, and do what he has said, and carry into execution his own purpose, would, it is believed, so hurt his reputation with the population of the apostacy, that any thing, that can be, must be done to save it. There must rather be suspicion cast over the whole record that would exhibit God as so inflexibly holy, and reproach poured in upon the bigoted multitude that would so rigidly explain the word. The book of God, plain as it is,

may rather mean nothing, and John record falsely, and Paul reason inconclusively, than to blot so foully and fatally the divine reputation.

To complete the picture, the Son of God is despatched from heaven to take the part of sinners, and shield them from the sword of a devouring justice. He saw, it seems, that the execution of the law would ruin the credit of the court of heaven which gave sentence, and hasted down to counteract the decree. What was stern, and unbending, and cruel in the Father, has been softened down in the Son. He covers the rebel with his hand, smiles on him, wipes away his tears, and prays him to forgive a father's unjust severity. His errand was to stay the rod of justice. He makes no atonement, none is necessary, asks no change of heart in the culprit, but a mere reform, as the condition of pardon and life.

Thus has the character of God been so exhibited, as to involve heaven in a quarrel, and place the persons of the Godhead at issue, on the question, whether the honours of the broken law deserve to be repaired, or its Author shall sink into universal disrespect? What in the mean time shall happen to the divine government in heaven, and in all the worlds that have continued loyal, and have had hitherto the utmost confidence in the unchangeably wise and holy God? O, I feel that the ground on which I stand is holy! Will God forgive me, if in attempting to vindicate his honour, I have drawn near to him without being duly sanctified.

I know that men who have resolved to go on in sin, who have long been offended at the purity and extent of the law, and would not care if all the rights of the Godhead were trampled upon, find it very convenient to have the character of God thus brought down to their taste and their temper. They will support and will love a gospel, that will thus make God altogether such an one as themselves. Give them a gospel like this, and in half a century there will not be an avowed infidel on the whole face of the earth. Gladly would they be rid of the reproach of infidelity, could they have a gospel that would promise them a salvation equally cheap and convenient.

If God will give out his word, and then break it; will make a law, and when men have fallen under its curse, repeal it; will join the rebel in hating his own attributes; will issue an edict, and then a counter edict by which the first is neutralized; this is all exactly as they would have it. God is invested with all the human weaknesses. So Ahasuerus would make a decree, assigning to death all his Jewish subjects, and then enact another, directing them to arm themselves for their own defence, and thus his decree comes to the ground. But how will God be affected by these inroads made upon his name and his glory? Will he suffer his character to be tampered with, and finally to be thus frittered down to the taste and the convenience of a polished, and proud, and worldly, and time-serving genera-

tion? Will it still be eternal life to know *him*, altered thus, till not an angel in heaven would know him? altered till all that devils disapproved, and all that believers loved, is gone?

Let me now ask the advocates of all these schemes, what they gain? Why not be willing, that the blessed God be exhibited to the minds of men, in the very character that he gives himself. Let him be what he declared himself to be, on that occasion when it was his special object to make himself known: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generations." Here we have, (if I may still use terms which it grieves me to use,) the *milder* and the *severer* attributes of God. In this very character we must deal with him at last, the same that he was when he spoke to Moses from the cloud. Let there be a perfect balance among his attributes. Let him be neither too merciful to be just, nor too "just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" not too compassionate to be holy, nor too holy to smile again upon the rebel, who has fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the gospel; not too gracious to be true, nor so the friend of truth as not to reverse the

sentence of death, when the condemned have repented and believed. God can have no darling attribute that shall eclipse the other portions of his character; can issue no clashing edicts; and did not send his Son to sooth, and flatter, and defend the rebel, whom his justice condemned, leaving him still in all his stubbornness and his pride.

Why this zeal to create confusion in the counsels of the Godhead, and sunder the attributes that cluster in Jehovah? Simply to gratify men who cannot be pleased with God as he is. But would they be pleased with God were his character altered? They could not love an unjust God, unless indeed he would pledge himself never to treat them unjustly. And on ceasing to be a God of truth, he could not give that pledge. The sinner will reason, When God shall cease to be offended with *me* for wronging *my neighbour*, he will not be offended with *my neighbour* for injuring *me*. If *I* may hurt another, and escape with impunity, *my oppression* escapes also. If *I* may pray upon the contents of *his purse*, and trample upon *his rights*, and sport with *his enjoyments*; then is there a world let loose, to trifle with *my interest*, and make inroads upon *my rights*, and blasts *my comforts*.

Thus is there spread a ruin as wide as the whole creation of God. Angels lose their confidence in him, and all heaven is made unhappy, while the despair of the pit is changed for the hope

of impunity . We assert then, that not the grossest infidelity , nor even atheism , holds out a prospect more dreary, than a gospel, that thus libels the character of Jehovah, and, by one grand mistake, sunders the whole of this alienated world forever, from the authority, and the rule, and the inspection, of an intrusive and disgusting divinity.

And when the error is on the opposite extreme, and the mercy of God is obscured, though a different motive may have led to this exhibition, and a different result may follow, still is that motive a mistaken one, and that result unhappy. God has not directed his ministers to keep the minds of his people filled with one or two selected attributes of his nature, but would have his whole character developed. Some may be deterred from embracing religion, from the impression that they must love a God whose character is cold, calculating, severe, and vindictive. And if sanctified under such a gospel, it is doubtful whether their religion will not be, either gloomy and desponding, or coldly doctrinal and polemic.

The character of God will not be found at last to have shaped itself to our mistaken views of him ; but will be, when we come to deal with him in the judgment, what it always was. The attributes and the glories that may now be obscured, eclipsed or neutralized, will all be there to cluster and harmonize in the burning glories of the Godhead on the day of retribution. A God will then meet us as holy,

and just, and true, as the law, and the lightnings of Sinai would make him ; and still as merciful, and gracious, and long-suffering, as Pisgah, and Tabor, and Calvary have declared him. He will confess himself in that day the Author of all the anathemas and all the promises of inspiration. Time will not have altered his character, nor the exigencies of betrayed and ruined souls moved him from a single purpose. There will gather in his brow all the majesty that makes devils afraid, and all the sweetness that makes angels glad ; the one will look the lost into despair, and the combined glories of the whole, look the saved into ecstasy. Then will be felt the full import of the text ; the only true God will be known, and to know him will be eternal life.

REMARKS.

I have three reasons to offer for thinking this subject of great importance.

1. *Men will have a moral character according with their views of God.* As the truth sanctifies, just so surely does error contaminate, and no truths or errors so assuredly as those that relate to God. They invariably pour their influence through our whole creed, and touch every spring of action. Hence if men think rightly of God, I cannot but hope that the truth will one day sanctify them ; but if otherwise I have fearful apprehensions of their ruin.

The basest of men act from principle, though from bad principle. They are profane, and false, and lewd, and dishonest, because some false views of God have begotten in them the hope of impunity. From a loose ministry, or vicious parentage, or vile associate, they have imbibed the principles that go to mould their deeds and their habits into the image of death. You may pass down if you please through all the ranks of immorality, from the young man in the gospel, who loved the world more than Christ, to the abandoned outlaw, and you will find as many different shades in their faith, as in the turpitude of their deeds. And every unregenerate man stands prepared to have his faith corrupted. He loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. He is on the watch, to hear something said of God, that may assist him in loosening the bonds of moral obligation. Hence many a youth has issued from the house of prayer, modest, civil, and decent, fearing an oath, respecting the sabbath, doing homage to religion, and giving high promise of future worth and usefulness ; but some wretch corrupted his views of God, and immediately he cast off restraint, and went out to scatter through society fire-brands, arrows and death. Hence if we regard the eternal life of our children, and the youth in our streets, we shall furnish them a gospel, and a library, and give them that instruction, which will lead them to a correct knowledge of God.

2. *Believers will have a religious character according with their views of God.* Nothing has been more obvious in the history of man, than the conformity of his religious character, to that of the God he believed in and worshiped. Pass through the territories of paganism, and, such as you find their gods, such are their worshippers. Are they fierce, and jealous, and lewd, and bloody, or mild and placable, such invariably are their devotees. And as you come up through the lower grades of nominal christians, ask them their views of God, and their answer will give you substantially the purity of their religious character. God is our highest object of respect and of imitation, and to be like him, the highest object of holy aspiration. Hence if in our esteem, his character is more or less pure and lovely, such we shall wish our own to be. He who sees in God no attribute but mercy, and never thinks of him but as a *father*, will be less likely to hate sin, and less careful to be holy, than the man who thinks of God as a *sovereign*, and a *judge*, as well as a *father*.

And the case will be similar as to *enjoyment*. No false views of God will render us as happy as correct views. If we see only the mild and merciful traits of the divine character, we may have joy, but it will not be solid and lasting. And if we look at God merely in the attitude of sovereignty, and may never call him our Father, or see his mercy commingled with his terrors, we shall be forever in bondage. There are no doubt many on their way

to heaven, who are so injured by their creed, as seldom to pray any other but the prayer of the condemned and the lost. They are serious and watchful christians, but never hopeful, and never happy : joint heirs with Christ, yet never venturing to say, Abba Father !

Nor will christians who have partial views of God be *useful*. It is when he appears in all his glories, attracting sinners to himself by the full view of his attributes, and mingling mercy with judgment, reigns to make his creatures happy, that we feel our souls inspired to be workers together with him in extending his dominions. It is then that it seems to us a grief and a pity, that there should be any heart alienated from him, any hands that do not labour in his service, or tongue that does not speak his praise. Not the *sovereignty* of God alone, nor his *mercy* alone, can make the most useful man. The one holds back the inspiring influence of joy and hope, the other begets a religion that will all evaporate in songs and hosannas. Angels are inspired, by seeing the whole of God ; and men will be more or less like angels, as "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, shall give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself." Then it is that we feel it to be a reasonable service, that we present our bodies and our souls to him, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.

3. *Society at large will shape its moral aspect*

from the prevailing views of God. As fraud and falsehood and blood invariably follow the track of idolatry, and the dark places of the earth are thus filled with the habitations of cruelty ; so in the different parts of Christendom, you may gather the prevailing notions of God from the morals of the community. Survey the darker territories of the Catholic communion, and tell me if, in rapine and murder, their population is removed more than a single shade from the dreariness and desolations of paganism. Where in Christendom is life and property least secure, where are daily assassinations, where the whole population prepared for any deed of darkness and cruelty ; but where there is least prevalent, a correct knowledge of God. And let any of the better territories of Christendom become apostate in their views of God, and how soon will vice spring up, the public morals be changed, the sabbath be lost, the theatre thronged, and dress and vanity fill the place of sobriety and prayer ! How soon will the true followers of Christ be persecuted, and family devotion, and christian watchfulness, and all the retiring virtues of holier times disappear !

Thus you have my reasons for thinking this subject important. For these, and others that could be offered, I would watch the public creed relative to the character of God, more tenaciously than at any other point. It is the fortress I would starve in defending, the strong hold into which I would fly with my

children, and feel myself, and teach them to feel, that it is the only safe place to die.

Will the blessed God make me far better acquainted with his character, and never subject me to the awful temptation, of thinking it a light thing to either overlook, or give paramount importance, to any one of the glorious attributes of his nature. Will he cause his name to be known in all lands, and make his praise glorious, wherever there are beings capable of doing him honour,

SERMON 3.



UNREGENERATE MEN WITHOUT HOLINESS.

ROMANS III. 18.

“ There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

THE text gives us man's native character. Such he is till the Spirit of God has sanctified him. The criticism that would apply this whole passage, to the people only who lived before the flood, or to a very few of the baser sort of sinners, is a contrivance of infidelity, and is extensively employed, in the present day, to betray and ruin souls. The man who is willing to shape his creed by the divine record, is entirely satisfied, when he reads the passages in the Old Testament which are here quoted; but when he finds them referred to, by an inspired apostle, and by him applied to the whole human family, Jews and Gentiles, no shadow of doubt remains. He is now content to lie down under the humiliating charge they bring, and is ashamed and confounded before the great Searcher of hearts. He who has become a new creature will consent, that “ God be true, though every man a liar.”

The fear of the Lord is a gracious affection, be-

longing not to the slave but to the son, and is the genuine fruit of a new heart, the beginning of wisdom. Hence where this affection is not, there are no gracious affections. And if this be true, and the text applies to all men in their unsanctified state, then it plainly teaches us, that *In unregenerate men there is no moral excellence.*

My object at this time will be, not so much to prove the doctrine, as to account for its having been controverted, and offer some reasons for esteeming it a highly important doctrine.

I. Many have mistaken the native character of man, from *having seen him capable of affections and deeds that are praise worthy.* It is not man's prerogative to judge the heart; hence if the tendency of an action is to that which is good, it is imputed to the very motive that ought to have produced it. If the deed has a fair exterior, it is considered ungenerous not to impute it to correct principle. Men judge however, on the maxim, that what is highly esteemed among men, cannot be abomination in the sight of God. Hence they dress up human nature in garbs of innocence; and conceive it impossible that there should be, under so much that is fair in conduct, an evil heart of unbelief.

They find men capable of kind, and generous, and honourable sentiments. They can be true, and trusty, and faithful, and affectionate; and they triumphantly ask, How can all this be when there is

no love of God in the heart? They see discharged, and sometimes quite honourably, the offices of parent, husband, brother and child, and all the other domestic and social relations, and impute it all, though to be accounted for on other principles, to native moral excellence. Hence they are precipitated into a controversy with that plain and humbling testimony of heaven, that "The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law nor indeed can be."

Why will not men believe, what the scriptures so plainly teach, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and from this truth infer, that very different motives may lead to the same deeds. We often see that an amiable disposition, a tameness and mildness, such as distinguish the lamb from the wolf, and the vulture from the dove; and that results in the exercise of many an amiable affection, and the doing of many a kind action; may consist with the practice of sin, the habit of a daily violation of the divine law, a prompt rejection of all the overtures of the gospel, and an inveterate disgust for the duties of a cordial and secret piety. We have recognized, where there was all the instinctive amiableness that is ever claimed, the existence of a polished and fashionable infidelity; have marked offence taken, at the distinguishing doctrines of revelation, at the scruples of a well disciplined conscience, at the frequency and fervency of devotional exercises, and the elevated views and affections of the revived and happy believers. Still

there were high pretensions to kindness, rectitude, generosity, and even piety. There was not a consciousness of the deep-rooted enmity of the heart to whatever is holy and heavenly. Men have wept under the sound of the gospel, and seemed the veriest converts to the truths under discussion, the affections enforced, and the duties urged, and ere they have passed the threshold of the sanctuary, have vented their spleen against the man, who reached their sensibilities, and drew from them in an unguarded hour, their reluctant testimony to the gospel he announced.

We do not deny, that there has been seen in men, not sanctified, much that it would be disgraceful not to admire, and envious not to praise, and evil not to imitate; and still we may have had indubitable evidence, that in the very same bosom there beat a heart hostile to God, and holiness, and heaven. Not certainly will God, who compares the temper of the heart with his law, approve always the very deeds that men have praised, or the men who may have stood immeasurably high in human estimation.

On this point the truth must not be concealed. We cannot say to sinners, that if they please man, God will assuredly be pleased; that if they speak kindly to man, and do deeds of mercy to him, the Eternal will say, "Ye have done it unto me." Their is no such assurance given in the record. And the time, or rather the *eternity*, will be here so soon,

when their whole character must be known, when they must stand before the omniscient God, and all their heart be opened, and their whole life be read ; that to deceive them, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace, would be cruel as death.

Their is neither the necessity nor the wish to deny, that unsanctified men have exhibited many natural excellencies of character. On this point I know not that there will be at last any controversy between *God* and them. Our Saviour looked at the young man in the gospel, and loved him, while yet he was unquestionably in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. We yield them traits of character that are amiable, and useful and endearing, and wish most sincerely that their need be no reserve in our praise. But while they have been kind, and neighbourly, and pitiful, and even generous to their fellows, they have robbed God. They have wept at the tale of distress, and hasted to succour the perishing, and bled in sympathy over the diseased and the dying, but have never shed a tear at the cross. They have believed man, and confided in him, and spoken truth to him, and have well earned his confidence and affection, but they have practically made God a liar. They have never fully credited either his threatenings or his promises, nor thought it necessary to take sanctuary in his Son. There has not been a moment in their whole life, take the time when their conscience was the most tender, and their sensibilities the most awakened,

and their deportment the most religious, and their hopes of heaven the most profound ; when some other object beside God, had not the high and distinct ascendancy in their affections. While they could treat men mildly, and be rebuked without wrath, and even endure divine Judgments without the appearance of rebellion ; they could still brow-beat all the anathemas of the law, and parry every thrust of the gospel, and live on, without reflection, and without prayer, and without repentance, and without God in the world. They still cared not for all the melting entreaties of divine mercy. God was not in all their thoughts, nor his religion in their lips, nor his throne in their hearts, nor his will controlled them ; while as the friends of the poor, the patrons of moral virtue, and the benefactor of the world, they were illustrious, and were promised in human eulogy a luminous and happy immortality.

Thus has the human character, all deformity as God views it, been exhibited as sound and good. Distinctions have not always been made, between what is *nature*, and what is *grace* ; what is mere *instinct*, and what is *holiness*. The multitudes of the ungodly have been blessed and dismissed, doubting whether their character was at all deficient, or they needed to be born again ; and high in the hope that a slight reform, and a little care, would soon prepare them to stand accepted of God. Even men who have worn noted marks of the apostacy, the covetous, the proud, the vain, and the worldly, have retired with a smile, to

enjoy their good opinion of themselves, and feed quietly, and sleep sweetly, while the wrath of God abode upon them. They have gone to their farms and their merchandize, to love and pursue supremely the cares of the life that now is, or bury themselves in scenes of dissipation and folly, not suspecting but that all was well, and all safe, till either the Spirit of God awakened them, or they sunk to a hopeless perdition: or they live still, and are filling up the measure of their iniquity, and are preparing for a deeper despair, than if they had perished far sooner. And they must thus perish it seems because they are amiable, while publicans and harlots, who have no such virtues to screen them from conviction, believe in the Saviour, and live forever!

II. Men have been led to controvert this doctrine *because they are not conscious of the wrong motives by which they are actuated.* Through the workings of a deceitful heart, ignorance of the scriptures, and sometimes by the aid of a heterodox ministry, men have totally mistaken their whole moral character. They are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. What the prophet says of the idol-maker, is more or less true of all unregenerate men in all ages, “A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” Hazael could not believe that he de-

served the character which the prophet gave him. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" And Jehu, when he cut off the house of Ahab, and destroyed the worshipers of Baal, would have felt himself abused, to be told that he was actuated by the love of praise. When the rulers of the Jews were charged with murdering the Lord of life and glory, though they had done this very deed, thought Peter a slanderer, in his attempt to bring this blood upon them. So Saul of Tarsus supposed that he was doing God service, while persecuting to death the disciples of the Lord Jesus. Thus may men act from the very worst of motives, and yet suppose them the very best. They do not consider it important to know what their designs are, and have not that familiarity with their hearts that would render it easy to discover. And thus they are led to controvert the truth, and quarrel with God, his word, and his ministers, who all give them the very character they have.

III. The doctrine of the text is often controverted *to support schemes with which this sentiment would not compare.* The sinner's entire depravity, is a fundamental doctrine, on which there can be built only one, and that the gospel system. Make this doctrine true, and it sweeps away, as with the besom of destruction, every creed but one from the face of the world. It settles the question, that God may righteously execute his law upon all unregener-

ate men ; that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified ;” that the doings of unregenerate men are unholy ; that even repentance will not take away the curse that has lit, and must rest, upon the man who has not continued in all the things written in the book of the law to do them ; that an atonement, such as God has provided, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, is the only medium through which we can purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. It further decides the question, that men will not seek after God ; that he must be found of them that sought him not, must give repentance unto life, must take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh ; that in the regenerate he must work, to will and to do of his own good pleasure ; and finally, that *he* must be an Almighty Saviour, who could redeem beings so lost, and put them back again into the favour of a justly offended God.

Thus it is only one scheme of truths that this doctrine will support ; the faith once delivered to the saints. If men depart from the truth, as we are told they shall in these last days, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, they must thus come into close and comfortless contact with a doctrine, which if true, gives the lie to all their false and delusive schemes. Hence we wonder not that “the foe of God and man, issuing from his dark den,” has here displayed, in every age of Zions conflict, his

mightiest chieftainship. Here must be the edge of battle, in every conflict between the gospel, and the systems invented by men ; between the friends and the foes of truth. This is the fortress that has been taken and retaken ten thousand times, where has been tried the prowess of God's people, and his enemies ; where has been displayed the power of God, and been put to the test the endurance of his elect, in all the ages that have gone by.

IV. This doctrine has been controverted *through the pride of the human heart*. Depravity is a most degrading doctrine, and *entire depravity* intollerable, till the heart has been humbled by the grace of God. There is in apostate men great pride of character. We would all be considered friendly to what is good and great, and such is God, even in the profession of the most depraved ; such is his law, and such is his government. With the promptness, with which we fly the touch of fire, does pride resist imputation. Hence enquires the unregenerate man, Would you deny me the credit of loving my Creator, Preserver and Benefactor ? Do I never obey his law, or do a deed from motives that please him ? And is there, among my noblest actions of kindness to men, nothing that amounts to love ? In my gladness for the good things that God bestows, is there not a shred of gratitude ? in my admiration of his perfections, and his works, no love ? in my belief of his word, no faith ? in my expectation of heaven, no

hope? in my sorrow for sin, no repentance? in my endurance of adverse events, no submission? and in my gentleness and condescension, no humility? Are my prayers sin, and my sacrifices abomination? Do I thus, on all occasions, break the *first* and *great* commandment of the law? and on all occasions the *second* also? In all my noble generosity, is there no benevolence? in my soft deportment, no meekness? and in my tears for the miserable, no pious sympathy? Must every deed I do have the same moral deformity? and God hate me, and his law condemn me, when I follow the kindest dictates of that nature he has given me?

Thus men feel, that if this doctrine be true, it goes to defame and ruin their character. It makes them go astray soon as they are born, speaking lies. It makes their righteousness as filthy rags. When they have washed themselves in snow-water, and made their hands never so clean; this doctrine, with ruthless hand, plunges them in the ditch, and their own clothes abhor them. When they industriously provide for their household, they are accused of loving the world, while the love of the Father is not in them. When they would go to the sanctuary, and pay their vows, there they hear from heaven, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?"

Thus, at every point, this doctrine comes in, to mar their reputation, and make them hypocrites,

and cover them with shame and blushing. Hence the Jehovah, who will give men this character, may reign in other hearts; and the bible, that will teach this doctrine, may lie neglected; and the ministry that will publish it, may starve; and the cringing multitude, who will believe it, may herd together, and together sink into the contempt they covet. Thus God is treated, and thus his word, and thus his ministers, and thus his people, because they maintain a doctrine, the sinner's disgust at which, establishes beyond the possibility of doubt, or the danger of mistake. It so degrades the characters of men, that they will not believe it, if they perish contradicting it.

I could offer other reasons, why this doctrine has been so frequently assailed, but shall proceed *to offer some reasons for esteeming it a very important doctrine.*

1. The fact, that *it is plainly revealed*, testifies to its importance. God would not have cumbered his word with a doctrine of no value. If we find it there, who will venture to deny its importance? and if *not there*, how does it happen, that those are its warmest advocates, who are most familiar with the bible, and most ready to regard its dictates? The context contains a very dark review of man's native character: and it would be infidelity to suppose it too highly coloured. "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth,

there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat *is* an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps *is* under their lips : Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet *are* swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery *are* in their ways : And the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we fearlessly assert, that this is given as the native character of Jews and Gentiles, by one whom the Holy Ghost inspired, and who could not mistake the truth. Believe the last clause only, and tell me if in men, who have "no fear of God before their eyes," there is any holiness ? "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Here again christian honesty will read the same doctrine. And the same in this text, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." And in this, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And that none may escape, it reads ; "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man : " And thus the uniform testimony of scripture. There would be no end in quoting the scriptures on this important point, till I had refered you to almost the whole bible. And a doctrine about which God will say so much, must be in his estimation, and should be in ours, of high importance.

2. The doctrine of the text is esteemed important, *as it is one of the first truths, used by the Spirit of God, in awakening and sanctifying sinners.* Till men see their depravity, they will not approve of the law that condemns them. They will be wondering, if indeed they think at all, why God threatens them, and be blaming the law as too rigid in its requirements, and cruel in its penalties. Now there is no hope of a sinner, while he stands in this posture ; and nothing will move him from it, but a conviction of his lost and ruined state. Hide from him the character of his heart, and you seal him up to everlasting stupidity. You can arouse him to no apprehensions of danger, for under the government of a good God none are in danger but *sinners*. And there will of course be no repentance. A thoughtless sinner sees nothing to repent of, nor any reason why he should repent, and the man who knows nothing of his heart will not be thoughtful. The commandment never comes home to his conscience. If he has hopes of heaven, it will be on the ground of his own self-righteousness. Thus the Saviour will be to him as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, and the work of grace can never be begun. Thus is the sinner, who is kept ignorant of his heart, sealed up to the judgment, and goes on as the ox to the slaughter, and the fool to the correction of the stocks. The spirit of God will sanctify only through the truth, and the entire depravity of the heart is a first truth, without a knowledge of which no sinner was ever yet fitted for the kingdom of God.

A gospel then, if we must so call it, that hides from men the deformity of their moral character, betrays and ruins them. It says to the wicked, that it shall be well with them, and thus cradles their fears to sleep, till their period of mercy is past ; and proves ultimately the greatest calamity that can befall them. It closes upon them the portals of eternal life, and keeps them dreaming, and fearless, till they open their eyes in hell. But when they at last make the discovery, perhaps on the bed of death, or it may be not till life has gone out, how will they execrate the recollection of such a gospel. It will come up to mind as does the tempest, that wrecked all their hopes upon the relentless reef ; or the fire that forced them to make a midnight retreat from the place that had been long their safe and happy home.

The ministers of Christ would love to preach a smoother gospel, if men could only be safe under it. It would be pleasant to have to do only with the *invitations*, and the *promises*, and the *hopes* of the gospel. They had far rather remind the believer of the joys to come, than to admonish the unbeliever of the judgment, the outer darkness, and the gnawing worm. They could have far more pleasure in describing the graces of the Spirit, than in portraying the deformities of the unsanctified heart.

But the grand object of the gospel ministry is to save souls, and this object is not gained, unless men are taught, as the very first lesson of that ministry, that they are lost. Hence to suppress this truth,

would be to neutralize at once the whole effect of this ministry. Whatever we may wish, we can be the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ to a ruined world, but on this one condition, that the alienation of our world from God, hold the place of a *first truth* in every effort of our ministry. The gospel has absolutely no meaning, and can be of no use, but to the *lost* and the *condemned*.

3. The doctrine of the text is esteemed important, *as it lies at the foundation of the whole gospel scheme*. The Lord Jesus Christ came into our world, to seek and to save them that are *lost*, and the whole plan of salvation is so interwoven with this fact, as to be unintelligible without it. What means the covenant of redemption, but in connexion with the fact that we are captives and slaves, and need to be redeemed? What is there intelligible in the atonement, but that we owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay? why urged to repent, but that we are in love with sin, and must otherwise perish? why believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but that we need a better righteousness than our own to shelter us from the wrath to come? why make to ourselves a new heart, but that we have by nature evil hearts of unbelief, inclining us to depart from the living God?

And let me ask, why all the threatenings of the gospel, but that it was written for the use of a disobedient and gainsaying people? why on every page

does there meet us some anathema, but that it was intended for those who love not our Lord Jesus Christ? why has death passed upon all men, but that all have sinned? why a judgment, and a place of torment, but that those who have carried their entire depravity with them into the coming world, may be distinguished, and may go to their own place.

Finally it is matter of doubt whether an honest man, acquainted with the bible, and willing to collect his creed from it, will find it possible to exclude the doctrine of the text from a fundamental place in its structure. What doctrine can he preach, if he denies it? what precept enforce? what threatening announce? what promise apply? we need no gospel if this doctrine is not true, and we *have none*. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Will the great God defend his own truth, and bless every effort for its vindication, and sanctify his people through its influence, and speedily let it cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Will he bring the multitudes of the ungodly to know, that they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, and persuade them to fly for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel.

SERMON 4.



THE GOSPEL SUSTAINS THE LAW.

MATTHEW V. 17.

*"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets :
I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."*

It is *then* only that the gospel appears in all its glory ; when it infringes not upon the sacred rights of the law. One of God's institutions must not eclipse the glory of another. God did not make provision for the salvation of men, because he had become convinced, that he had issued a bad law, and would thwart its design. The law stood in his eye as glorious, after men had drawn its curse upon them, as when it dropt fresh from his lips amid the smoke of Sinai. When he instituted the law, he knew that men would break it ; and he affixed its sanctions, sure that all our race would *incur* them, and many *endure* them. It was not an experiment, made without a knowledge of the result, but with the result provided for.

Hence the legal and the gospel dispensations, are but different parts of the same benevolent system ; by which a good Jehovah, would bind to himself, and when the bond should be broken, would recover and restore to his love and favour, beings he

had eternally designed should be happy. And hence our Lord thus early announced it as his design, not to abrogate but establish the law. Fixed and stable as were the ordinances of the heavenly bodies, and firm the earth he had come to plant his feet upon, these should all pass away, while not a jot or tittle of the law should fail.

Accordingly as the Lord Jesus gathered disciples, and freed them of course from the curse of the law, he still subjected them to it, as a rule of duty. He transferred, from the Jewish church to his own family, the very commandments which Moses wrote on the tables of stone. Not an item did he repeal, not a precept alter, not a sanction soften. And the whole gospel is a broad and lucid exposition of the law. Hence it is now as much the fact as ever, that, "Cursed is every one, that continueth not in the things written in the book of the law, to do them." I shall state, in a few words, the error I would oppose, and which, as it seems to me, is in direct opposition to sound reason, and the whole bible; and then proceed to illustrate the doctrine of the text, that *The gospel was not intended to supplant, but does sustain the law.*

I. *State the error.* The scheme is, that men by the fall, if not disabled, have become so averse to the law, that a *perfect* obedience is impossible; and that God will now except of an obedience that is sincere. If men will obey the law, as well as they

are able with their carnal mind, the temper which, without their fault, they inherited from their first parents, God will accept them; and wherein their obedience fails, the merits of Christ will be substituted. By this scheme, the death of Christ removes the curse of the law, from all men, soon as it lights upon them: for all *do render* to the law, the best obedience they are *disposed* to, and of course are safe, if they should live and die without repentance. It must be seen in a moment, that, if to whatever extent men are *unwilling* to obey, they are *unable*, then all obedience, but that which *is* rendered, is dispensed with. And *none* is rendered; for a kind of sincerity, consistent with the most confirmed hatred of God, and his law, and which, for ought I see, devils may have as well as men, becomes a substitute for right affections, and has all the merit of a perfect obedience. The whole amounts to this; God relinquishes his right, to any farther obedience, than men, totally depraved, are disposed to pay him. In this scheme an atonement is made necessary, in order to finish out, and render accepted the obedience of the sinner.

This scheme, as altered to accommodate it to modern taste, relinquishes the atonement, and substitutes repentance. At whatever time in this life, (and why not in the life to come?) the sinner shall be sorry that he has broken the law, and shall practice some reform, God will promptly forgive him, without any reference at all to the scenes of Calvary.

He has in his heart so much compassion, and cares so little,—it amounts to this,—whether the law is respected or reprobated, that the very first tear of the offender, washes away all his sins.

These schemes are substantially the same, and are alike subversive of the law of God. They agree in casting off this poor world from all allegiance to its Maker, and virtually render him a God, not worthy either of the fear of devils, or the esteem and confidence of angels.

I have thus stated the error, and have meant to do it candidly, which seems to me to pour its contaminating influence, through all the false systems of theology, which are at present employed, to injure the church of Christ, and destroy the souls of men. I proceed

II. *To illustrate the doctrine of the text.* I shall arrange my thoughts under six general remarks; The *first* great commandment of the law, from its very nature, cannot be repealed; Nor can the *second*; The spirit of the law and the gospel is the same; The gospel is a useless devise, but on the supposition, that the law is good, and must be supported; The gospel, that shall set aside the law, will defeat its own design; The gospel is most glorious when the law is fully sustained.

1. *The first great commandment of the law cannot be repealed.* “Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thy heart." The very nature of this law decides, that a gospel which would neutralize it, would be a curse and not a blessing. The Creator must require his creatures, to consider him the object of their supreme regard ; he can ask no less of devils. This precept is founded on the divine excellence, and must abide in force, while God shall continue to be good. And as God is unchangeably good, this precept must abide for ever. He would sanction injustice, if he should repeal a law, which requires, that men render unto God the things that are God's. An act like this would create alarm in heaven, and send a premonition of ruin into every world that has continued loyal.

Moreover an act that should release intelligent creatures from loving supremely their Creator, would ruin the very beings thus released. Hence sang the christian poet ;

" From *thee* departing, they are lost, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace."

This has ever been, and must continue to be, the law of hell, of earth, of heaven, and of all other worlds. Nothing that God has made has sufficient greatness and grandeur, to become our supreme object of regard.

" Give what thou canst, without *thee* we are poor ;
And *with thee* rich, take what thou wilt away."

The capacity that God has give us, must be gratified, or we are miserable ; and if it be gratified, God is loved according to the commandment,

Now a gospel that should set aside a law like this, would prove a miserable expedient for a revolted world, as it would rob God of his deserved honours, and man of his highest happiness. How impossible that God should have given us such a gospel! He never has, and never will, unless he could wish to see us all miserable. To be restored, from inordinate attachment to the creature, to supreme love to God, is salvation itself; and how can this be effected, by annulling the precept that enjoins this very change? And we assert

2. That *the second great commandment of the law cannot be repealed*. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, as thyself." This, like the other carries, on the very face of it, its claim to perpetuity. The first commandment was intended to bind the creation to its Maker, the second to bind creatures to each other. Neither of these ligatures can be sundered, and creatures be happy. To love our fellow men, is to make them subservient to our enjoyment: for to love is usually a delightful exercise. If God had commanded us to hate our neighbour, he had subjected us to the necessity of disobeying him, or of being lastingly unhappy. In proof of this position I have only to refer you to facts. Ask the man of passion, who daily goes home enraged at some one of his fellow men, there to study revenge, whether *to hate* makes him happy. Or let this audience call to mind some of those seasons, when they were enlisted in some

obstinate quarrel, and when for whole days, and perhaps for weeks, passion rested in their bosom, and tell me if you were not unhappy. Then in commanding men to love one another, God has simply forbidden them to be *unhappy*; has given them leave to be happy.

And the *measure* of our love, as here given, what could be more equitable. My neighbour is a sensitive being like myself, is capable of equal happiness, and that happiness worth as much to him, as mine to me. Hence God must value his blessedness, as much as mine : and it is my duty to feel as God does. Hence if God should repeal this law, it would be consenting that men should do wrong, have feelings at variance with his, and love happiness simply because it is theirs.

To repeal this law would be to license selfishness, the very passion which has filled this unhappy world, and kept it full, of misery. If men are not obligated to love each other *as themselves*, then is there no standard by which their affection can be measured, and they are at liberty to hate and devour one another. If the gospel has set aside this law, then all the outrages which men have committed, one upon another, have been licensed depredations : for God has disapproved, only of what was a violation of his law. If he has annulled the precept that required men to love, he has virtually given them liberty to hate, and has sanctioned a total disregard of the second great commandment of the law.

But nothing like this is true. The law still makes on fallen creatures a demand, as large as upon the first pair in their innocence, and continues to press its obligation after they are lost. The miseries of hell would be mitigated, if this law could cease to be binding. The lost might then hate and torment each other, without increasing their guilt.

3. *The spirit of the law, and the gospel, is the same.* The spirit of the law, as we have seen, is love; and the same is true of the gospel. In the inventory given us of the fruits of the Spirit, the first named is love. This is the bond of union in heaven, and all who are verging toward heaven, cultivate love, as the fundamental principle of their piety. When we read, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," we have in other language, the whole spirit of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And when we read, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:" do we not also read, "For this is the law and the prophets." Here the Lord Jesus Christ himself identifies the two, as if to settle the point forever, that he came to expound and enforce the very precepts of the law of Sinai. And the man must be grossly ignorant of the New Testament, who does not recognize it, as the very law of the ten commandments, broken down to the relationships, and the exigences of human life. In both Testaments

we have the same divine character, the same code of doctrines, the same christian graces, the same social duties, and the same pure and holy religion.

When the gospel offers a pardon, to those who have violated the law, care is taken that the law be fulfilled and honoured. The law is not censured, nor the sinner violently wrested from its curse. A substitute is furnished, on which the curse may light; a substitute who had himself perfectly obeyed the law, who loved it, held it in high and holy respect, and died because he would not see it dishonoured. Had it been a bad law, hastily conceived, and imprudently promulgated, Christ would not have borne its curse. If too severe, he would have recalled its edicts, and would have mitigated its sanctions, if cruel. It was his *first* concern to secure the honours of the Godhead, and to do this he must sustain the law; his *second* to redeem the wretch who had broken it, and was condemned.

The Saviour had no more compassion than the Father; loved justice, truth, and holiness no less; hated sin as much, and hated the sinner as much, and was as unwilling as the Father, that a jot or tittle of the law should fail. He did not engross in himself all the benevolence of the Godhead; and was not a partisan with the sinner against the law. He did not come to make war with the Law-giver, but with sin; not to vindicate the rights of the condemned, and wrest them from the punishment to which some ancient and cruel decree had exposed

them ; but to cover them with his body and his life, from the miseries they deserved to endure. Thus the law and the gospel have both the same spirit, and press the same design ; to honour God, and make his creatures happy.

4. *The gospel was a useless device, but on the supposition that the law is good, and must be supported.* Nothing can be more absurd than a gospel, designed to free men from the curse of the law, while that law is already repealed, and has ceased to be binding. Hence the Lord Jesus Christ, lest men should make a mistake on this subject, declared very early in his ministry, that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. Indeed the very hypothesis on which the gospel is built, is, that the law is good, its precepts right, and its penalties binding. If otherwise, the law should have been repealed *without* a Saviour. As soon as it was discovered that the law was not adapted to our circumstances, was too strict, or too severe ; instead of subjecting Christ to the pains of the cross, to relieve the culprit, he should have been pardoned without an atonement. Probably those who deny an atonement are brought to this erroneous result, by some indefinite conception, that the law is repealed, to provide the way for man's recovery.

Our reason tells us, that there should have been no substitution, for those who had broken a bad law, or a law which for any reasons whatever it was not

wise to sustain. If not wise to execute it, in the last extremity, upon the offender himself, than assuredly, not merely unwise, but monstrous, to punish the substitute. There should have been proclaimed immediately a free and full pardon. There was the greatest possible cruelty, in the transactions of the cross, but on the supposition that the law is too good to be set aside, even if the population of a world must perish to do it honour.

5. *A gospel that shall set aside the law will defeat its own design.* Tell the sinner, in the same message in which you offer him a Saviour, that the law he has broken, is repealed; or has come into disrepute, and its curse less to be feared than formerly, and he will answer, Then I have no need of a Saviour. If my Sovereign is convinced, as I long have been, that the law is too rigid, he will not punish its violations; if its penalties are unjust, he will not execute them. I reject your offered Redeemer, and approach boldly to the throne, to demand my acquital. It is mocking me, to talk of an atonement, while I have done only right, in opposing a cruel and oppressive legislation.

Thus the advocates of a gospel, built on the ruins of the law, soon as they make the secret known, that the law has perished, furnish the sinner a motive for rejecting the gospel they offer. Thus they labour in vain and spend their strength for naught. They may urge the overtures of their gospel, till

they have become grey in the service, and their hearers will remain unchanged and unreformed. The only consistent course is, to justify wholly the law, or offer no Redeemer. We must make man the diseased, and suffering, and dying creature, that the book of God describes him to be, or we need offer him no physician; must make him blind, or offer him no eye-salve; make him guilty and condemned, or offer him no pardon; make him polluted, or offer him no cleansing; make him an exile, a captive, and a slave, or offer him no redemption. The estimation in which we hold the *law*, will decide, whether we shall have any success in offering sinners the *gospel*.

6. *The gospel is most glorious when the law is fully sustained.* The glory and the grace of the gospel, must, in the very nature of the case, be exactly commensurate, to the claims and the curses of the law. The one must contain a woe as broad, as the blessedness implied in the other; must present a ruin as wide and desperate, as the cure presented in the other; must frown as implacably, as the other smiles complacently. When we can thus honour the law, and justify the Law-giver, and defend, without misgiving, the most punctilious execution of every threatening that has issued from the lips of the Eternal; then it is that we can equally elevate the glorious gospel of the blessed God: which else becomes as worthless as the Shaster or the Koran.

The deeper and the darker the pit into which I had sunk, the mightier that arm that could lift me out. The full glories of Calvary, have never been seen, but by the same eye, that has descried ineffable beauty in the divine legislation. The gospel will be shorn of its last beam, when it shall be made to eclipse the splendour of the law. It is only the dead in sin that need the offer of life, the condemned that need a pardon. Christ is the Repairer of the breach; make the breach wide, and you make the Repairer illustrious. Carry not the fertilizing influence of the gospel, but into the very territory, where the curse of a good law violated, has spread a boundless desolation. There its healing waters will be welcome, an Edon will blossom under your feet, and the harvests of many years, repay your toil, and make glad your heart. May the blessed God put honour upon his own institutions.

In bringing my remarks to a close, let me say; that the law *cannot* go into disuse. It expresses exactly the mind of God, and must be the rule of duty to his obedient subjects forever. And when broken, as it has been in this unhappy world, its curse must fall, and remain upon the head of the transgressor, till he flies for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the gospel. Till then he lies condemned, just as if a Saviour had not died; with this difference, that his condemnation, if he perish will be aggravated by his having been offered redemption. He might have had life but would not,

unless on such condition, that his transgressions might be justified. I close with

REMARKS.

1. How tremendous the ruin of sinners, who after all this, shall fall under the condemning sentence of the divine law. God we see will not set his law aside. He would give his own well beloved Son, to expire on the ragged nails, to save those who had broken the law, and incurred its penalty, rather than give his foes occasion to say, that he had repealed it. "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If God appeared so inflexibly holy, on Calvary, where he drew his sword upon the sinner's substitute, how terrible the indignation that he will display in hell. O, is there a man, so hardened and so daring, that he would venture to pass through life, and go on to the judgment, with the curse of the violated law resting on him! When he shall see that Redeemer, who saved others, but in whose blood he would not take sanctuary, coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, will he not regret, that he had not been interested in his atonement? And when his destiny shall issue from that Saviour's lips, and he goes to make his bed in hell, will he not learn, what now he is so unwilling to know, that "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good?"

The torments of the lost, will be an abiding tes-

timony of God's regard to his law. And those who shall have escaped to heaven, when they shall "look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed," will be feeling more and more strongly forever, how great are their obligations to the Saviour, for redeeming them from the curse of a law, so fearfully holy. And who, that places any value upon his soul, and believes that God will thus jealously guard the honour of his law, and has not already made him incorrigibly angry, will delay an hour, in securing an interest in that Saviour, who bore the curse for us. O, my friend, haste your escape, as you would at midnight from your burning house, as you would from the jaws of a ravening lion, as you would from the terrors of a volcanic eruption, as you would from the fire that can never be quenched, and the worm that shall not die.

2. The subject will I hope prepare us to contemplate with horror, the condition of those congregations, who have selected for themselves a ministry, that builds its instructions on the ruins of the divine law. Would to God that I were mistaken, in supposing such a case to exist. But when I hear, from lips that profess to have been touched with a coal from off the altar, that man is quite an upright being, has committed a few errors only, and these all venial, not sufficient to condemn him; that he needs no atonement, nor Saviour but to teach him, and be his pattern, and this Saviour *not* divine;—When I hear

of sentiments like these from the pulpit; I fear there is a controversy with the law of God, and that it is meant to be understood, that he has relinquished his demand, upon the sinner, of a stricter obedience, than he is disposed to yield.

Thus by putting aside the law, as we suppose is done in the outset, and hewing down the whole system to accommodate it to this fatal error, the whole, though somewhat consistent with itself, is rotten and deceptive. Thus the sinner is lulled, and soothed, and when asleep, is kept slumbering till he is lost. He never has any proper sense of his sins, nor respect for the violated law, nor regard for the holiness, and justice, and truth of God. He never becomes humble, nor fears God, nor embraces the Saviour, nor quits his sins. The gospel he hears is like the Siren's song, that lures but to destroy. It keeps men stupid till it is too late to be anxious to any profit.

O, ye lost and ruined congregations! if my voice might reach you, I would tell you to look well to the ministry you attend. While it pretends to offer you life, it may destroy you. If you find it aiming to lessen the number, and diminish the aggravations of your sins, you ought to suspect it. You never will betake yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, as your precious and only Saviour, till the commandment comes home to your bosom, high and imperious in its claims; holy, and just, and good, in all it requires, and in all it threatens, In the

sense of the apostle, sin must revive and we die, else there can be no hope that we shall be made alive in Christ Jesus. The multitudes who have gone to heaven, and the whole army of believers who are bound thither, know the period when they felt themselves justly exposed to eternal death. The gospel that pretends to find you quite whole and happy, needing only a little instruction, and perhaps some reformation, and aims not to alarm and distress you, you may rest assured is a lie, and not the truth; it comes from hell, and not from heaven, and if embraced, will conduct you back with it to the recesses of perdition.

SERMON 5.



CORRECT VIEWS OF CHRIST ESSENTIAL.

LUKE IX. 20.

“ Whom say ye that I am ? ”

ADMITTING the fact, that men may speculate correctly, while their hearts are unsanctified ; or to some extent *incorrectly*, after they are born of God ; still it is a general truth, that men will be, in their moral, and in their religious character, corrupt or correct, in the same proportion with their creed. If on any important subject they believe a lie, their false faith will present to their hearts wrong motives of action, and lead to those affections, and that course of conduct, that is in opposition to the law of God, and the precepts of the gospel. But if men believe the truth, though it be not with the heart unto righteousness, still that truth may exert, at some future day, a sanctifying effect upon them, and the creed adopted, through the Spirit's influence, mould them into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if there is one subject, rather than any other, on which a serious man would guard the correctness of his faith, it must be relative to the character of

the Saviour he trusts in for eternal life. It must be essential, that we put our trust in the very Redeemer that God has revealed; else how can we hope that he will acknowledge us, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

Can it be otherwise, than a very important thing, to the human family, to understand distinctly *his* nature, and character, in whom they are invited to take sanctuary from the wrath to come? Hence to know, that the gospel proclaimed to us, presents the very Lord Jesus, through whose stripes we must be healed, will be a question of minor importance to none, who calculate, first or last, to turn their eye toward heaven.

In Christ's little family, this subject was early and earnestly agitated. Our Lord would not suffer his disciples to be ignorant on this point. "He asked them saying, whom say the people that I am? They answering, said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again." He then brought the question home to their own bosom, "Whom say ye that I am?" Said the prompt and affectionate Peter, "The Christ of God."

This subject is of high and increasing importance, at a period, when it is becoming so fashionable, to consider it of no consequence what we think of Christ. It will not be so much my object, to exhibit proofs of his divinity, as to show, that whatever his character may be, it is important that we

have correct views of him. I shall arrange my thoughts under three general remarks ; The Lord Jesus Christ has a fixed and definite character ; This character is plainly revealed ; If we trust in a saviour, having any *other* character, than that revealed in the scriptures, the Lord Jesus Christ will not consider this trust as reposed in him, and we shall be in danger of perishing in unbelief.

I. *The Lord Jesus Christ has a fixed and definite character.* It would hardly seem necessary to state a proposition like this, much less to attempt to establish it by argument, as it contains in itself its own confirmation. The scriptures have given this name to the promised Messiah, who, in the very nature of things, must have a character so definite, that he can be known by his name. But if the name may apply, with equal propriety, to one who is divine, angelic, or human, here it seems to me is the end of all knowledge on this subject. Place other subjects of revelation on the same footing, and we can only *guess* at any thing.

The very idea of a *revelation* implies, that there are truths revealed, but nothing is revealed, if revealed so indefinitely, that we cannot arrive at knowledge on the subject. As well might the bible have merely named the Saviour, if after all it has said of him, we can know *only* his name ; especially if it be an equal chance, whether we shall conceive of him as one of the Three that bear re-

cord in heaven, or a worm of the dust like ourselves. If God has told me only the *name* of the Redeemer, and this is all the definitive knowledge I can have of him, I may be so infatuated as to apply this name to a comet, or a star, and affirm that God intended I should trust in *this* for salvation. If he has left it to my discretion to adorn the name, with attributes, such as I would choose my Saviour should possess, then is it manifest that no two would trust in the same Redeemer.

But there is an absurdity in the very supposition. Every thing that has being, has properties that are essential to its being, of which if you disrobe it, you take away its very essence. Thus it must be with the Lord Jesus Christ. You may call by that name a being, so divested of the attributes that belong to the Saviour, that he shall cease to be the Saviour God has revealed, and be as entirely another, as if he had had another name. The identity of being is not in the *name*, but in the *nature* or *attributes* that belong to it. I remark

II. *The character of the Lord Jesus Christ is plainly revealed in the word of God.* We might infer this from the fact, that the bible is a revelation from God ; and that the principle subject of development in that book is the Saviour. The bible was given us to make Christ known, that we might take sanctuary in him from the wrath to come. Hence to suppose that his character is left so indefinitely

developed, that we can know nothing with certainty respecting him, is to suppose God to trifle. There is an impudence and a daring in the very supposition, that causes the mind to shrink from naming it.

Moreover on opening the bible I do see the character of the Saviour, as definitely developed as any other of the subjects of revelation. I see distinctly his humanity, in that he had a body and a soul as men have. He hungered, thirsted, slept, was weary; could suffer, could rejoice, he spoke, and walked, and rode, and bled and died. And I see as distinctly his divinity. He created all things, could make the bread and the wine that sustained him, could know the hearts of men, could heal the sick, and raise the dead, and give sight to the blind, and still the waves of the sea. And I will name one text, among many, in which he is predicted with all these characteristics. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Here the same personage who was a child and a son, is also the Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

But on this point I will only stop, to say, that on no particular is the bible more full and plain than on this. On none of the doctrines or duties of religion have we instruction more definite. I may as

well doubt what repentance is, and what faith is, and what love is, and what prayer is, as *who* Christ is. I can explain away the truth on any point, as readily as relative to the Character of the Saviour. And moreover on every point the truth *has* been doubted, and mistakes as essential made, as on this point. Men, who are not willing that the bible should govern their faith, have missed the mark infinitely on *every* doctrine of revelation.

III. *If we trust in a saviour having any other character, than that given in the bible to the Lord Jesus Christ, he will not accept this trust, as reposed in him ; and we shall be in danger of perishing.* If Christ has a definite character, and he must have, or he can neither be known or trusted in ; and if his character is revealed plainly, and this must be, or it is no harm not to know him, or to have erroneous views of him ; then it must be essential that we trust in the *very Christ revealed*. If in these circumstances we believe him to be possessed of a character that he has not, if we invest him with attributes that he will not own, or detract from him the essential and eternal properties of his nature ; will he pity our weakness, and own, as confidence in him, the trust we place in a saviour created by our imaginations ? This, it seems to me, is the fatal error which multitudes in the present day, are persuaded to adopt. It has in its favour the plea of catholicism. We can thus fellowship the whole mass of nominal chris-

tianity ; and on the same principles can even go farther, and place the image of the Saviour in the temples of the gods, and embrace in one universal brotherhood, the whole multitude of idolaters that have ever bowed the knee at the shrine of devils.

On the same principle, that no harm comes to our piety from erroneous views of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can prove that God has been pleased with, and has accepted, every act of worship that has ever been paid to an idol. What is an idol, but the Supreme so degraded that he ceases to be divine ? and still not more degraded than is the character of the Saviour in many a modern creed. What was Jupiter, but Jehovah disrobed of his essential attributes. His worshippers did not reduce him down to a mere man. They gave him supremacy over the whole family of god's, allowed him to wield the thunders of heaven, and decree the destiny of nations. True they did not give him a very pure moral character, but the best they knew how to give him. They invested him with some of the very worst of the human passions, and made him commit the foulest deeds of wrong and of outrage. But still, who can say, on the principle that it matters not what we think of Christ, that the worshippers of Jupiter were not accepted of the Lord as his own worshippers. If they called their great spirit by *names* that God has never appropriated to himself, this it will be acknowledged is a verbal mistake, a small matter, that God will not regard, in those who had not the means of knowing the names,

by which he would choose to be invoked. But shall we go on and say, that as they gave their supreme deity the highest character they knew how to give him, although they did not invest him with the attributes essential to the true God, and made him finally a creature, in moral character base and deformed ;—Shall we still say, that Jehovah was pleased with the spirit of their worship, approved their rites, and accepted their homage ? I see not why, on the principles of modern catholicism, this reasoning is not correct, and why the whole herd of idolaters, in all ages, have not been accepted of the Lord, as having intended to pay their supreme homage to him.

If what an apostle says of the Lord Jesus Christ be true, and “By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist;”—if all this be true, I see not but those who give him a derived and dependent existence, alter his character as essentially, from that which the apostle gives him, as was the character of Jupiter distinct from that of Jehovah. What two things can be more unlike, than a Saviour who had no beginning of days, is self existent, and almighty, could create men, and build worlds; and one who himself began to be, is dependent, and has none but borrowed attributes. I do not see that the heathen Jove, and the God of heaven, differ any more.

If then the Lord Jesus Christ possesses one of these characters, and we trust in a saviour who possesses the other, and the bible has plainly revealed *him* in whom we are to trust, it hardly admits of a question, whether we do not trust in another than the Christ of the gospel. It is not merely in the *name* of the Saviour that we trust, but in his attributes, in his qualifications to atone for us, in his power to sanctify us, in the credit he has in heaven to intercede for us, in his ability to subdue our enemies, and cover us with his righteousness in the day of retribution; but if he be not *God* as well as man, he has no such qualifications to atone, no such power to sanctify, no such influence to intercede, no such ability to defend, or righteousness to cover us; hence there is no such saviour as him in whom we trust.

Agreed, if you please, that the error will be equally fatal on either side. Be it so that the Lord Jesus Christ is a mere attribute, an emanation, an angel, or a man; then do those who give him a *divine nature* make a mistake as great, as is made by their opponents, if he be, as the prophet asserts, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. If *he* be a mere creature, in whom God has directed us to put our trust for everlasting life; and that creature has power delegated to him, to pay the price of our redemption, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and we resolve to trust in a Saviour, who possesses divine attributes; we then rely upon one who is not

revealed as the Saviour, and may have no more hope of acceptance, than those have, if the opposite creed be true, who in their faith depress his character, as much as in this case we elevate it.

If the Lord Jesus has a fixed and definite character, has properties or attributes, of which if we disrobe him, we alter essentially his nature, and make him another Saviour ; then the question is, whether those who trust in him, under these essentially altered characters, may all be said to trust in the same Redeemer ? May a mistake like this be considered venial ? If too God has given us in his word a plain and intelligible record of his will, and may not, as it seems to me, be considered as having described the character of the Saviour so indefinitely, as to render it about an equal chance, whether we shall conceive of him as human or divine ; then must it admit of a serious doubt, whether any radical mistake can be made, without placing the soul at hazard.

God must have intended that we should have definite views of Christ ; and if he has given us opportunity to be correct, it argues positive wickedness, not to receive the truth of God in all its naked simplicity. If he has revealed a *divine* Saviour, we perish if we trust in one that is a *creature* ; or if, *contrary to the light*, we believe him *divine*, then do we rely on some other, than that only name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. No trust can possibly avail us, but that which is

placed in the very Saviour whom God has revealed. Let me place the two Saviours in opposite columns, and see if an honest mind can make them one.

The one Saviour, was before all things, and all things were created by him and for him. He has the titles, possesses the attributes, does the works, and accepts the worship, that belong only to the true God. He invites sinners to him, as having in his own arm the power to save them, and promises them blessings, as having them of his own to give. "He that believeth in me shall never die." He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "With his stripes we are healed." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The redeemed in heaven will forever ascribe to him, under the appellation of the Lamb, kingdom, and power, and glory. The dying believers may with Stephen commend to him their departing spirits. In the last day he will come in the clouds of heaven, with his holy angels, and will judge the world, and fix the destinies of all men; and be forever afterward adored, by the myriads of the redeemed, as the Lamb that was slain.

The other saviour, had a beginning of days, and either emanated from God or was created by him. He has divine titles, only as men have, who are called gods; has only borrowed attributes, and a delegated power, and is worshipped only as kings and emperors are. We may not pray to him, lest we be guilty of idolatry; he promises nothing but as the Lord's prophet, and has no blessings of his own to give. We are not required to believe in him, but as we believe in Moses and John. He makes no atonement, but merely teaches truth, and is a pattern of virtue. He dies, not that we might live, and meets us again in the last day, not to judge the world, unless as a subaltern, but to *be* judged. He will wear no crown, and fill no throne in heaven, other than such as are promised the apostles; and will receive no worship, but the respect due to an eminent servant of God. And if the dying commend their spirit to him they assuredly perish.

Now the mighty question is, are these two, the same? Are they so the same that the trust reposed in the one, will be accepted and answered to, if needs be, by the other. If but one of these Saviours is revealed, and but one exists, and we have put our trust in the other, are we still safe? Say we have cast our souls upon a created Saviour, shall we find at last, that we have an interest in that self-existent Redeemer, who comes travelling in the greatness of his strength, and is, independently on any extraneous help, mighty to save? If of the one it may be said, this is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved, will this be equally true of the other? I repeat the question, for it is to me a mighty one, Can it be of no consequence, to which of the two I look, and in which I trust for eternal life? Will the blood of *either* cleanse me from all sin? If the Saviour appointed me and distinctly revealed in the bible, has life in himself, and the power of conferring eternal life on as many as the Father has given him; and I have trusted in man, and made flesh my arm, I fear it will not answer me the same purpose in the day of retribution, as if I had made application to the true, the appointed, the eternal Redeemer.

It is agreed, that if there be no Trinity of persons in the Godhead, and the Saviour proffered is a mere creature, and we refuse to lean upon the appointed arm of flesh, and obstinately insist on having an almighty Saviour or none, our condition is deplorable.

We shall then be without a hiding place in the day of our distress. If the Saviour be *God*, those perish who esteem him a *creature*; and if a *creature*, those perish who believe him *God*. One of the parties in this controversy is to lie down in everlasting sorrow, one only will be in heaven. Else two beings, the one *finite*, and the other *infinite*, are the same, and Jupiter and Moloch, and Baal, and Jehovah are the same, and the worshippers of idols, in every dark place of the earth, may claim at last a seat in heaven, with Abraham, and Moses, and the prophets and apostles.

Can this be true? I see no radical error in the reasoning that has brought me to this result, and am led to ask, with all the seriousness with which a question ever dropped from my lips, Am I safe in either case? Has the gracious Jehovah given me a revelation, in which he has so indefinitely described my Redeemer, that with all my anxiety to know, I cannot, whether he built the worlds, or was himself a part of the creation? whether the government is upon his shoulder, or he is himself subjected to the authority of his superior? whether he can bestow eternal life, or needs to have his own life sustained by the power that breathed it? whether he will judge the world, or will stand to be judged, by a greater than himself, who shall then fill the throne? I shall be anxious for my soul till I know the truth.

O, will the blessed God give to a world like ours, already desperately ruined, a revelation of his

will, and mock our helplessness, by asserting it to be so plain, that the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err, and still when I labour to know the truth with all my soul, I cannot find it!! But I must either take this ground, or believe *myself* lost, or believe *those* lost, who I perceive trust in quite another saviour, than him on whom I rely. There is one thought that gives me relief, "Let God be true, though every man a liar." The bible is a plain and intelligible volume; the Saviour's character is there definitely revealed; and we can learn *who* he is, and *what* he is, unless we choose to be deceived. May the exalted Jesus smile on this weak attempt to vindicate his character, and may he sanctify the men who would tear the crown from his head, and worlds from his rule; and make his way known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. May a great multitude, that no man can number, be redeemed to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

If asked the reasons why I consider this subject so important? and press it so vehemently? I answer

1. *With the views I have of the Lord Jesus Christ, I consider him shamefully traduced by the error I have meant to expose.* It cannot seem to me a light thing, if the safety of souls were not affected, what men think of Christ; whether they give him the honour he had with the Father before the world was, or make him a weak and dependent mortal; whether they es-

teem him such that he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, or the mere wandering Gallilean, who gathered his honours from the success he had in teaching truth and in making disciples. If we have given him our hearts, we shall not be willing to see him degraded. We shall wish him to retain all the titles that belong to him, and be owned in all the high and holy offices he fills, and wear in the view of men, all the glories that cluster round him in the view of angels. We shall feel ourselves so honoured, in being permitted to call him Lord, as to be greatly grieved when the tongue of slander, or the pen, dipped in the gall of depravity, shall attempt to degrade his nature or mar his honours. A christian needs offer no other reason for vindicating his Lord, but that he loves him. But

2. I offer another : *I consider souls endangered, by a denial of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.* I cannot believe that when the Saviour has become a *man* or an *angel*, he will attract sinners to him, as when he has the glories on, that I suppose the angels see about him. Let him have the same character that he has in heaven, and he will attract *men* to him, as there he attracts *angels* to him. If he be God, they will hope that he can save them ; if he built the worlds, they will be the more willing to believe, that he built some happy world for them ; and if he is at last to be their judge, they will feel it to be the more important, that they be washed from

sin in his blood. I should not hope to win a single soul to him in a century, in the low, and mean, and dependent attitude, in which some professed ministers of the gospel, in consistence with their faith, must present him. I should expect them to sneer at the Nazarine, more than did Voltaire, or Hume, or Bolingbroke. And I do not believe, that under such a ministry, Christ is often embraced, or loved, or believed in. He may have some place in their creed, and may become a topic of speculation, and controversy, but in their religion, and in their hearts, I fear they learn to do without him: surely he is not formed in them the hope of glory.

3. *I would take a dying hold of the doctrine of Christ's divinity, because on the same principles, by which the faith of so many have been unsettled on this point, every truth of God's word can be cast away.* Only suffer the enemy to have the ground, and hold it in peace, which he would take to drive you from this doctrine, and he will leave you nothing to credit, in the whole of divine revelation. He will tear you from the very horns of the altar, and sacrifice you, along with your Redeemer, on the threshold of the sanctuary of God.

When I must believe nothing that is above my reason, and that I cannot fully comprehend, I may not believe the simplest testimony of revelation. When, from the urgency of this principle, I can know nothing definite respecting the Lord Jesus

Christ, I despair of gaining from the book of God any definite knowledge on *any subject*. Not the being of a God, or his government over the world, or the fact of a future judgment, or an eternal state of retribution, is revealed with any more definiteness, than the underived deity of Jesus Christ. I could reason them all away, and every doctrine and precept along with them, by the same sophistry, by which men would forbid me to offer my prayers to the risen and exalted Redeemer. I would then hold to the doctrine, because if I give it up, I must give *all* up, and throw my whole creed afloat, and myself afloat, to be drifted, I know not where, and shipwrecked, I know not upon what inhospitable shore, where await me, *death*, or *life*, I know not.

4. If you still ask me, why my zeal, in defence of the higher nature of the Lord Jesus Christ? I answer yet again, "*If it be possible,*" and "*the very elect*" *should be cajoled into a doubt on this subject, it would do them incalculable injury.*

That doubt would *mar their creed*; for they must yield *other* doctrines, when their Redeemer has become a creature. That atonement, which he only could make; that ruin of our nature, which he only can repair; that ever-enduring hell, from which he only can rescue us; that sabbath, which his rising made; that Comforter, which he kindly sent; and that plenary inspiration of the scriptures, which establishes his divinity; must be all plucked from

their creed, and it would stand then, like a pine, lightning-smitten, scorched in its every leaf, and riveted to its deepest roots, to be the haunt of the owl, and the curse of the forest. When you shall blast my creed like this, you may have, for a farthing, the residue of my poor mutilated bible, and I will sit down and weep life away, over this benighted world, to which is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

It would *diminish their comforts*; for the same truth that has sanctified them, has made them happy; and no truth more than the high character of their Redeemer. Take away this foundation, and what will the righteous do? Their hopes have been high, and their joy elevated, and their songs heard in the night, because they had, or thought they had, a mighty Redeemer. From this fact, they calculated to live out the assaults of temptation, and conquer their lusts, and hold on by some pin of the covenant, till they should plant their feet on the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem. Tell the church, that she has no such *almighty Redeemer* as she has dreamed of, and there will be tears in all her tabernacles, and I fear if there will not be silence through half the choir of heaven, and the angels of God be afraid any longer to worship him.

It would *hurt their usefulness*. They have had high hopes, because they had a mighty Redeemer, and were active in duty, because they had elevated hopes. Sap these hopes, and you sunder the very

sinew of action. Will they care to be sanctified, when they shall have learned that their Lord was peccable? Will they press on, to see him as he is, and be like him, when they shall doubt whether he will be known in heaven but by the nail-prints? will they care to invite others to him, when he is robbed of all the charms that attracted them in the days of their espousals? Will they pray with the fervency they have done, that the heathen may be given him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, when they shall know that he is to rule by delegation, and does not come into the government by heirship? Will they spend their perishable wealth to honour him, when they shall feel assured, that he has no incorruptable treasures with which to repay them?

How is it with those who have made the experiment, and have delivered over their creed to be blotted and interlined, till the Deity of their master is gone, and every other truth that hung on it; are they active for God? Do they bless the heathen with the gospel? do they disseminate the bible? do they press the consciences of sinners, in their daily walk, and in their evening visits, and give an ungodly world no rest, till they love their eclipsed and darkened redeemer?

O, hide then this error from God's elect, and let them have the Saviour they are disposed to serve, till he take them up, and show himself to them in

all the glory that he had with the Father before the world was.

I naturally close with the question, "What think ye of Christ?" This question faithfully answered by the minister of the gospel, will give you very much the character of his ministry; as it will define the Saviour he proclaims, and of course the success he has; and answered by the private christian will give the character of his religion. I do not now mean to say that orthodoxy is piety, but simply, that the heart that has been sanctified through the truth, will apprehend and love the truth. In other words faith, will credit the divine testimony. Does the Lord Jesus hold in our ministry, and our creed, the high place that God has given him in the gospel? If we make him merely a teacher and a pattern, so was Moses and Paul. And if we feel that we need no higher saviour, then is it doubtful, whether we have discovered more than half our ruin. If we have sunk no lower, than that a finite arm can reach us, we have yet I fear to learn, that we are sinking still, and that the pit is bottomless. A gospel that is the contrivance of men, will suit only those who have never felt the plague of their own hearts. When we shall have felt the full pressure of the curse that rests upon us, we shall feel the need of one to save, strong as him that created us. The horrors of our condition will scare from us every deliverer, but him who can quench, with his own blood, the fires that have been kind-

led to consume us. When we have looked once upon the incensed throne, we shall hail one as our high priest, who can go in and sprinkle the mercy seat; who can neutralize that consuming ire which issues from the countenance of a provoked Jehovah; one who has that influence in the court of heaven, that he can procure our acquital, and can place himself in the van of the redeemed multitude, and conduct us up to heaven, and there plead his own merits as the ground of our acceptance, and the foundation of our everlasting blessedness. "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

SERMON 6.



CHRIST REDEEMS AND SANCTIFIES.

TITUS II. 14.

“ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

MORE than eighteen hundred years since, we were visited by a stranger from a foreign world. Two questions were immediately agitated. Who is he? and What his errand? He settled them both; but they have come up, again and again, to the present day. The discourse preceeding this had a bearing upon the *first* of their questions, and the text now before us, will require us to attend to the *second*. It is selected, you will remember, from that very book which he left with us, on purpose to answer every inquiry that men would need to make respecting himself and his mission. We learn in the context, who it was that thus gave himself for us, “ The great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This audience are aware, that the same men, who deny that our Saviour Jesus Christ, is the great God, differ as widely from the apostle, relative to the part he acted for us. They would allow that

he was commissioned to make known to us the will of God, especially the fact of a resurrection, which nature did not reveal, and establish christian ordinances, and set us an example of virtue. That his death was vicarious, or a substitute for our condemnation, they would generally, and I presume universally deny.

Now if we need a Saviour to do more for us than this, then we need, not the one they offer, but whom the apostle exhibits to our view in the text. If my sins must be atoned for, if an evil heart of unbelief must be removed, and when sanctified, I must still be accepted through the merits and the righteousness of another; then I need a Saviour to do more for me than teach me truth, and give me ordinances, and be my pattern in virtue.

Had my ruin consisted merely in having lost a knowledge of God and duty, an angel might have become my instructor, and his example would have answered me the same purpose, as that of the Son of God. It would have seemed in that case wholly unnecessary, that God should be manifest in the flesh. But if the whole *heart* was faint, as well as the whole *head* sick; if there hung over us the curse of a broken law, and we were so alienated from God as to be content in perpetual exile from his service and his fellowship; then both instruction and example, if nothing more were done, would be wholly lost upon me.

What can it avail to present truth or exhibit puri-

ty, before a mind that disrelishes moral beauty, unless provision is made to subdue the aversion of the heart? And even then, how could I be happy with the curse of a broken commandment pendent over my head? O, give me such a Saviour as Paul describes, or when all is done, there is left undone the main thing requisite, to my obedience and my blessedness. If the Lord Jesus Christ came merely to instruct me, so did the prophets and the apostles; and their example, had their hearts been perfectly holy, would have been all I needed on this point; and thus either of them might have been my Saviour as really as he who is now frequently exhibited as the only Redeemer.

If I must be content with a Saviour, who is merely my schoolmaster; I am led to ask; Why so much said of him previously to his advent? Did prophets anticipate his approach many thousand years; and martyrs hang their hopes on him so long; and angels announce his ingress, soon as the time was out; and spend the night by his manger; and a voice from heaven name him the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and was this mighty personage, who so long held a world in agonized suspense, merely some teacher coming to do for us what any man if commissioned could have done as well? Is Jehovah accustomed thus to pour honour upon a creature, sent on an errand no more grand than his?

“Is ocean into tempest wrought,
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly?”

No man can have a very deep sense of sin, and not feel his need of having done for him more than all this. He who owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay, will need a Saviour who can take that debt upon him. He who has drawn upon himself the denunciations of his Maker's law, will need a Saviour to bear that burden for him. He who has a carnal mind, that is enmity against God, is not subject to his law nor can be, will wish a Saviour who can subdue that heart to loyalty and duty. And he who, after all this is done, dare not hope for heaven, unless taken by the hand, by some mighty Prince, and led every inch of the way till he is within its threshold, will inquire if no such Captain of his salvation is provided? And he will open his bible, and read a single sentence, and there, the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, for whose appearing to judge the world his people are looking, is the very protector and friend he needs; "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The text furnishes a natural division of thought, and will need the aid of no numerical distinctions.

Who gave himself for us. His presentation at the altar of justice, as our victim, was his own act. He is not seized and bound, as the barbarous nations secure their victims, willing or unwilling; nor comes to the altar, as Isaac did, not knowing

where the lamb was for a burnt offering. He had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again. *Not merely was he given*, although this was true, but *he gave himself*. And it was not merely his *time*, and *strength*, and *patience*, that he gave, as instructors do; but his life. How easily could he have blighted all our hopes in that dark hour. Had he sent Judas to his own place, or rendered him an honest man, when he came to steal the betraying kiss; or had he struck lifeless that midnight band, that came to apprehend him; or had he let down into hell that senate chamber, with its mass of hypocrisy; and paralyzed the sinews of that soldiery that crucified him; then had there been none to betray, arrest, or murder the Lamb of God. And he had all this power in himself, else he did not *give himself*. He who goes to death without his choice, by a power, human or divine, that he cannot control, cannot be said to lay down his life: his life is taken from him,

But the Sufferer of Calvary, when he left the bosom of the Father, had his eye fixed, and through his whole life kept it fixed upon the scene of the cross, as the finishing act of his humiliation, and felt not that his work was done till he yielded his life. Hence while it is true that the *Father gave his Son*, it is equally true that the son *gave himself*. He was as voluntary in *redeeming* the world, as in the act that *built it*.

Who gave himself *for us*. Here each word has

meaning. Who are we to understand by *us*. Not Paul himself and the good brother in the gospel to whom he wrote, merely. If another apostle may decide, the Lord Jesus Christ was "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." I have no wish now to enter the list in that controversy, which never should have been among brethren who hold the Head, whether the atonement, as distinguished from redemption, is *general* or *limited*. Those who do not distinguish atonement from redemption, must limit it, or avow the salvation of all men; and those who do thus distinguish, may with propriety make atonement general, and still are not accountable for a consequence, which is made to follow, not on their principles, but that of their opponents.

Is there not a common ground, where those who love the truth can and must meet? Neither of the parties, to whom I now refer, assert, that God has purposed or will accomplish the salvation of all men, through the atonement of Christ; nor on the other hand, will deny, that the atonement places the human family at large, in circumstances happily differing from that of devils. To men there go out overtures of mercy, to devils none. But does it not follow, that if mercy is offered, and the offer sincere, salvation is possible; that is, the obstructions are removed on the part of God, that would have kept men from heaven, even had they repented? and this is precisely what I understand those to mean, who make the atonement

general. The death of Christ rendered it possible for God to save, without dishonouring his law, or weakening his government, as many as it should please him to sanctify.

And what is the force of the preposition, *for* us? Can it mean less or more, than that the death of Christ was a substitute for our condemnation? this idea is certainly consonant with the whole drift of revelation. “He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed:—the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all:—for the transgressions of my people was he stricken.” Thus the griefs, and the sorrows, and the wounds, and the bruises, the chastisements, and the stripes, all fell on him by substitution, and were borne instead of the everlasting miseries of hell, which we must have borne, had he not offered himself as our ransom.

The apostle proceeds to make known to us the design with which the Saviour gave himself for us, “*That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us.*” There are here included pardon, and sanctification.

First pardon. The sinner can neither be considered as redeemed from iniquity, or purified, while his conscience is polluted with unpardoned sin. He is still under the curse of the law, has the brand of infamy upon him, and the badges of death

around him. Hence when he believes, and pardon can be administered, without injury to the divine government, his cleansing from the defilement of sin is begun. There is a text in one of the minor prophets, which though spoken with reference to the church, is beautifully expressive of this first act of God's mercy to sinners. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." And in another text it reads, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And we have the delightful idea of forgiveness in this text, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." The very first act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, secures this blessing, and we stand though not on the same footing as if we had never sinned, yet the same as relates to our exposedness to the penalties of the law. The transgressions of the law, that had been minuted against us in the record of the divine mind, are blotted out. God even speaks as if he would forget them, and never suffer them to come into his mind again.

But pardon, as rich a blessing as it is, to a sin-

ner made sensible of his gross and dreadful departure from God, holds a place second in importance to that of sanctification. Hence to *purify us*, was an important part of the work which the Lord Jesus Christ came to do for us; by which I understand, delivering us from the power of sinful affections. This is done through the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, and is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ, in as much as the Spirit acts a part in the economy of redemption, subordinate to that of the Mediator, and is spoken of as sent by him. He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh, and creates us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Christ is formed in his people the hope of glory, his image is impressed on the heart, and the lineaments of that image are drawn out to view in deeds of loyalty and duty.

Thus the Lord Jesus Christ brings his people to feel like him, to love his character, his law, his government, and kingdom, and all the duties of piety, and benevolence. And his purpose and promise is, that where he has begun a good work he will carry it on, till all moral pollution is eradicated. Thus the character of man, under the transforming influence spoken of in the text, is changed, till in a moral point of view he is no longer the same man. From being a child of wrath fitting for destruction, he becomes an heir of God, and a candidate for glory, honour, immortality and eternal life. The desire to be holy, and so like his Master, becomes his ru-

ling passion. In his estimation conformity to God, in the whole temper of his mind, is the greatest good, and no hope gives him such joy, as when he can say with confidence, "Then shall I be satisfied when I wake with thy likeness."

While the followers of the Lord Jesus are thus under a process of sanctification, they become, as a matter of course in a world like this, a *peculiar people*. They have desires, and hopes, and enjoyments, and fears, and aversions, such as are found in no other people. They have another employment, and form other habits, and sustain new relationships, and enter new society, and in their speech and demeanour, embracing a thousand nameless things, become a peculiar people. Whatever pains they may take to conceal their peculiarities, they become and continue like no other people on the face of the whole earth. And the more they act in character; the nearer they live to their Master, the more sure are they to widen the contrast between themselves, and the world of the ungodly. Hence the world will soon know them, and break from their fellowship, and cast out their names as evil; and Christ will receive them, and be a God unto them, and they shall be his people.

They are *zealous of good works*. Here perhaps more than at any other point is seen their peculiarity. The promptness, the pains, and the sacrifices manifested in doing good, render them the perfect contrast of any thing seen in the habits of unsanctified

men. Hence the fact is not to be disputed, that the personal efforts, and charities that have been expended upon human misery, degradation, and contempt, have been the efforts and the charities, of this peculiar people. On the list of this world's benefactors their names are arranged alone, and the catalogue will tell to their advantage in that day when the Saviour shall be heard to say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

The ungodly may have fits of charitable feeling, when provision is to be made exclusively for the life that now is ; but their charities do not usually extend in their effects beyond the grave. When urged to enlighten those that know not God, or snatch from death those that have not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; they lack the faith that can give importance, to these religious and spiritual realities. And yet here, where the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, is the very spot where the godly display their warmest zeal, and make their best, their mightiest efforts. The zeal of God's people is uniform and extensive, and does not like crackling thorns and burning coals make a great blaze and die. It grows out of the combined influence of the christian affections, or rather *is* the christian affections concentrated, and pouring out their energies upon the object of their commiseration or praise.

Christian zeal aims to render this world what God would have it ; to draw it back, from alienation and misery, to subjection and enjoyment. It would cure every species of plague and suffering, and render holy, respected, and happy every child of the fall. And when *men* need not its aid, would compassionate the animal creation, till not a worm should suffer. Thus will operate the zeal that piety begets, and thus the redeemed of Jesus Christ, will be rendered, in a world, cold and friendless like this, a peculiar people.

There is still another thought in this text, which though *last* is not *least*. These redeemed, and peculiar, and zealous beings, Jesus Christ is said to purify *unto himself*. I see a very precious thought here ; they belong finally to him. They were given him in the covenant of redemption. Hence we hear him say, in that remarkable prayer just before he suffered, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” And lest any should draw a wrong inference, from the fact that as Mediator he was a recipient, he addresses the Father again, and says, “All mine are thine, and thine are mine.” His people are to be his associates forever ; his family ; his friends ; his admirers, and his worshippers. “I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory.”

There is something in this thought which to me bespeaks the Saviour divine. Were he a mere ser-

vant, were he less than the very builder and proprietor of this world, he could not have been given a commission of such a nature, as to entitle him to possess, and call his own, the beings he should save: else it would not be true, that the Eternal cannot give his glory to another. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, came to redeem to himself, by his death, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. I close with a few paragraphs of

EXPOSTULATION,

With such as cannot relish this mortifying gospel. I am fully aware, and lament it, that every position taken in this discourse is controverted; and my apology for the view I have given, is that I could in honesty give no other.

Man's lost and desperate condition, requiring an atonement, is found, in one shape, and another, on almost every page of the bible, and his safety depends on knowing it, and the gospel was sent to acquaint him with it; hence this must be a radical truth in every message which we carry from God to man. Moreover we see men exhibit that temper, and form those habits, which would teach us their ruin, if we had not been taught it from heaven. Now a truth that comes to us so confirmed, we must receive, and must proclaim; and if men will not believe it, or if they do not choose to lay it to heart, we can only say with the prophet, "If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places

for your pride." If you can keep your apostacy a secret from your fellow men, or from angels, or from devils, do; and if you can hide the shame of it, do; and if by such a course you can escape the dire consequences of that apostacy, do. We wish you safe, and wish you happy, and if you know of a *safer* or *happier* course than this gospel presents, you have but to make the experiment. But then remember, if your experiment fails, and you do not find out your ruin till death, you must not calculate, that your mistake can then be corrected.

If you are conscious of some depravity, and still cannot make up your mind to owe your redemption to the death of Christ, then you must reject the bible or explain it as you can. The text, says he gave *himself* for us. And we hear him say, "I lay down my life for the sheep." And many scriptures that have been quoted, and more that might be, seem evidently to put his blood in the place of ours, and heal us, if we are ever healed, by his stripes.

Why object to the idea that he died for us. Does it too much degrade and blacken the human character, that we must thus come as it were to the place of execution, and have the halter about our neck, and there stand and see another take our place, and hang upon the tree in our stead? I know it will be the everlasting disgrace of our world, that we should have so conducted as to render it necessary that Christ should die for us. But it will deepen

our disgrace, if we deny the fact, and assign some other reason, not the true one, why the Lord of glory was hanged on a tree. We shall then crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame.

If *his* was not a vicarious death, why did he die? Do you answer, "Death hath passed upon all men for that all have sinned." Then it seems you make him a sinner? But the good book assures me, that there was no guile found in his mouth. Satan came and found nothing in him. He was a Lamb without spot. Do you say that he died to finish out his obedience? Obedience to *what law*? Does the law of God require that his perfectly obedient subjects should die? or is death there made the wages of sin? I see no demand for his death, unless he died *for us*, or was a sinner. If you are not driven to the same alternative, and can invent a third reason, more satisfactory, you must adopt it, and make the bible bear you out in it if you can.

Do you object to this gospel because it requires that you be *purified*? Then it seems you doubt whether sin has polluted you? and if so why have any gospel? or you choose to carry all your moral deformity with you into the grave, and into eternity, and if so, then we understand you. You have only to let the gospel alone then, and let others, who would not choose to die in their sins, have the benefit of its overtures.

A gospel that shall not render men holy, can be worth nothing. It may gather, and baptize, and

cast the enclosures of a covenant, about a congregation of worldlings, but if it have no purifying effect, it will leave them still the children of their father the devil. They will be as fair candidates for perdition, when such a gospel shall have exerted upon them its mightiest influence, as when its first accent broke upon their ear. But a gospel like that which Paul preached, must urge the claims of the divine law, and press men to break off their sins by righteousness, and turn their feet to God's testimonies. It will gather motives to holiness from all worlds, from the fear of hell, from the hope of heaven, from the comfort of the present life, and especially from the love of Christ; for it will "thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Now let us be prudent enough to have this very gospel, or none. If we wish merely to be amused, let us not employ a gospel to do it, but the pipe, the timbrel, and the dance. If we care not how much pollution adheres to us when we are judged, then let us cast the gospel and the whole bible from us, and enter into a covenant with death, and make an agreement with hell, and eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

But you dislike the *peculiarity* urged upon believers in the gospel. You wish not to be singular, and be cast out of the world while you remain in it. Well, we simply say, that there can be no gospel,

gathered from the bible, that does not urge it, nor christian character without it. If the truth must render men holy, it must, in a world like ours, render them *peculiar*. In two respects the good man, from the moment he is born of God, becomes unlike the men of this world. All the features of depravity that are cast from his character, and the features of holiness ingrafted on it, will tend to render him peculiar. Thus in two directions will the difference widen, and will go on extending through time and through eternity. To produce this peculiarity is the very design of the gospel; for men by nature are unlike God, and the gospel, when it produces its legitimate effect, renders men like God. Hence unless it sanctify all men, or the regenerate are taken immediately to heaven, it must introduce into society a peculiar people. If you are offended with this peculiarity, then you need not put it on. You can live in this world without it, and you can die without it, but you cannot live in heaven without it.

That *zeal* begotten in his people by the grace of God, constitutes I know the most offensive feature of their peculiarity. But God's people cannot be without it, and please him. And he has never promised to render his people what the world can admire. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore shall the world hate you." You need

have nothing to do with this people, or imbibe their zeal if it offends you. There is current a gospel, and you can attend upon it, that pours out against this zeal the whole torrent of its invective. It would nourish a cold philosophical religion, that shall never reach or warm the heart, that will have but little to do with prayer, or praise, or holy feeling, or heavenly aspiration, or effort to save souls; or take away, in any shape, the curse that has lighted upon this dark world. You can take your pew under such a gospel and never be urged to zeal and engagedness. But where it will conduct you, may demand a doubt. Not to heaven surely, where they cease not day nor night saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." There must be great zeal where there is such perpetual worship. *Day and night!* O, how such zeal as this would be lashed and scouted, in this cold and cheerless world!

But the gospel of Jesus Christ, aims to make this world as much like heaven as possible; would beget all the zeal they have there, and all the industry, and all the celestial fire. We hide not our wish, to render men, in this world as much in earnest in serving God, and blessing his creatures, as they are in heaven. And, sure as you breathe, you have never seen a zeal like that in heaven. It was not in Paul, nor Peter, nor Brainard, nor Whitefield, nor Martin. And if you have ever once seen

enough any where to offend you, depend upon it you could not stay in heaven an hour.

Finally it offends you, that the Saviour should be the proprietor of the church he purchased with his blood. You would have him an agent, a prophet, a messenger ; you would not allow him to own his sheep ; you would make him an insignificant subject of that kingdom he purchased with his blood. And why this *zeal* to degrade him. Did he not earn the kingdom with his stripes, and his wounds, and his sweat, and his dying agonies ? And did he not build the very world in which he has set up this kingdom ? The apostle thought proper to speak of his purifying *to himself* a peculiar people.

And why not let them *be his* ? Are *you* afraid to be his ? would it grieve you to be a member of his family, and have a seat at the supper of the Lamb ? Well, dear friend, there will come a day when you will be afraid, if you are *not* his. When he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and all his holy angels with him, and the last trumpet shall have waked you from the sleep of the grave, then “he that believeth shall not make haste,” but all others,—oh, with what hurry and confusion will they quit their sepulchres ! and with what untold anguish, will they call upon the rocks and mountains, to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ! Will you not then wish that you were his ?

Ye disciples of the Lord Jesus, did it ever occur

to you how precious a thought this is. You belong to this very Lord Jesus. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." How safe and how happy, if he can make you so? and you have no fear but he can. Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you. You will see him come directly to gather you, and you will hail him as he comes, "My Lord, and my God." My soul casts in her lot with you. We glory in belonging to Christ, and look wishfully toward that hour, when we shall see him as he is and be like him. Then, almighty Redeemer, then shall I be satisfied when I wake with thy likeness. Amen.

SERMON 7.



TERMS OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

ACTS XVI. 30.

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

PAUL and Silas, in the faithful discharge of their duty, found themselves at length immured in the dungeons of Philippi. There they lifted up their voices in prayer and praise; and the prisoners heard them; and what was to them of far higher importance, God heard them, and sent his angels to deliver them. The bars of their prison were sundered, their doors flew open, and their bands were loosed. The result was, a deep alarm fastened upon the mind of the prison-keeper, venting itself in the language of the text, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Now the gospel aims to bring *every man* to the very spot where that man was brought, and then direct him to a Saviour and to heaven. There must be alarm, because there is danger, unless in those, perhaps very rare cases, when a Saviour is embraced, or rather the heart prepared to receive him, before the danger is fully discovered. Unless we see our danger we shall make no effort to escape

from the wrath to come. And men will have so soon slept the sleep of death, and alarm be of no avail, that humanity requires every possible effort to wake them.

Hence no curse can be greater, than a ministry calculated to keep men secure in their sins. At no other point does there await you so much danger. Your servant may be idle, and your steward defraud you, and your best friend betray you, and still you may suffer but a temporary loss; but if he who is the mouth of God to you, deceive you, put darkness for light and light for darkness, your loss may be irreparable.

In the report of that gospel, which the Lord Jesus Christ will approve at his coming, the text must be fully and correctly answered. The sinner must know exactly the terms on which God will accept him. One may have some general notion that he is a sinner, that a Saviour is provided, and that possibly he may have life through that Saviour; and still be so much in the dark relative to the terms of acceptance, as to miss of eternal life. The mere fact that a Saviour died, if fully known, is not sufficient to secure salvation. The bare atonement, if there be no application of it to the soul, will avail nothing. Christ fulfilled the demands of the law in behalf of all who, in the appointed way, shall become interested in his blood. But if this atonement be neglected; if we listen to a gospel that on this point misdirects us, and we do not become qualified

to enjoy salvation, it will no otherwise affect us, than as an aggravation of our condemnation. My plan will be, *to show what is not adequate instruction on this subject, and what is.*

I. I am to show, *what is not adequate instruction on this subject.*

1. When men are urged to *a reformation*, as what will put them into the way of life, the instruction is inadequate. If men quit their grosser iniquities, and become decent and civil, still no promise of heaven reaches them on this condition merely. Where in the gospel are any such terms stated? I know that men are obligated, to break off their sins by righteousness, forthwith. John directed some bad men who came to him, to cease from violence and become honest, and contented; but John did not mean to leave them here; hence did not say, that on these terms Christ would receive them. These were rather the conditions, on which they could be prepared to receive his instruction to advantage. If I should meet with a drunkard or a thief, and they should ask me about the gospel, the first lessons I should give them, would be on the subjects of sobriety and honesty. Men are sometimes too far gone in the by paths of death, to give the gospel a candid hearing, and learn what the terms of salvation are; and then the first lesson given them may have respect to their waywardness; and when the gospel

has gained this footing, then you may tell them of salvation to advantage.

But there may be this external reformation, and there often has been, while yet there was no preparation of heart to receive the Saviour, but sin was loved, and rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue. Men may quit their sins from motives of interest, or ambition. Gross iniquities are scandalous, and expensive, and may be abandoned from the supreme love of something else beside Christ.

The fear of the wrath to come, while yet there is a prompt and a total alienation of the heart from God, may induce men to break off some habit, that threatens their sure and speedy perdition. But there is not a text, in one of the pages of inspiration, that exhibits this superficial reformation, as the condition of pardon and acceptance through a Saviour. The young man that would know what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life, was civil and decent, and still was unfit for the kingdom of God, and was sent away very sorrowful. It will not be denied but that he had become a moral man, but he still loved supremely the good things of this life.

2. When men are directed, not merely to break off some of the grosser iniquities, but *to perform some of the mere external duties of piety*, the instruction given them is still inadequate. The very same motives that led to the one, will often lead to

the other. The very same man, who would cease his profaneness, and his sabbath-breaking, and his lewd song-singing, and his drunkenness, and his midnight revellings, because he had become ashamed of their vulgarity ; will have prayer sometimes in his family, and will attend upon a preached gospel, and have a bible in his house, and read it occasionally, because all this is civil and decent.

And sometimes this cheap and superficial religion, is the high way to preferment. Men will be to some extent religious, if they can obtain character by it, and can make it a stair-way to office, and influence, and wealth too. They will bow and cringe to men, and God too, if they may obtain suffrages by it. Men will consent to be any thing, if it will make them great in the life that now is.

And they will perform duties, in hopes to gain heaven by this means. If God will excuse them for hating his law, and character, and government, they will attend upon his ordinances, and pay an outward respect to his sabbaths, and repeat their creed, and rehearse their prayers ; and account it a cheap salvation. And this it will be found is not an unusual resort of ungodly men. In every period of alarm, away they fly to christian ordinances. So in the darker times of Israel, they would steal, murder and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and then come and stand before God in his house. And it is declared in that case, that they trusted in lying words that could not profit.

God has never spoken of this external attention to religious things, as the terms of acceptance with him : for there may be still an evil heart of unbelief. The prayers uttered by the lips, may neither have their source in the heart, nor throw back upon it the least impulse to piety. They may not even engross the thinking powers, but may be in the ears of Jehovah like the prating of the parrot. Men have no doubt uttered prayers, while the hostility of their hearts, could they have been conscious of it, to the God invoked, and the Saviour whose name was used, would have driven them from their knees, and sealed up their lips in the sullenness of perdition. And the Scriptures have been read, while the heart quarrelled with every doctrine and duty they enforced. And ordinances have been attended, and sabbaths kept, and charities given, and confessions made, while there was the deadliest hostility to all that is holy in God, or purifying in truth.

3. If you add to all this *a profession of godliness*, the instruction given is still inadequate. In professing godliness, men often add perjury to their other deeds of wrong. A profession is not unfrequently the very climax of their impudence, and their daring. Ah, how mistaken have ministers and churches been, in supposing that when they had persuaded the ungodly to enter professedly into covenant with God, they had secured to some extent the object of the gospel institutions. They have not unfrequently

lived to see their convert a more daring sinner, than previously to his hypocritical adoption of the covenant ; and have been grieved that they had not left him without the enclosures of the fold. They brought him up to sealing ordinances, sprinkled clean water upon him, and made his lips touch the consecrated symbols of a dying Christ, but the heart remained a mass of moral putrification ; and the sacrifice offered, was but a smoke and a stench in the nostrils of an insulted Saviour. They painted and varnished the sepulchre, while within it was full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. It is many a time obvious, that so far from there having been any thing gained, by thrusting the worldling into this religious atmosphere, you have but the more effectually blocked up the last avenue to his conscience, and thus placed him perhaps beyond the reach of hope and of heaven.

But suppose if you please the very best case, and tell me if in this visible transformation, the Lord Jesus Christ will see any thing, that he will consider a compliance with the terms of life and salvation which he offers ? And I have left out of view the question whether it *be right* to do so ? whether without the bidding of Jesus Christ, we may thus administer his holy ordinances to unsanctified men ? Are we in such a procedure, honest to souls ? is now the question. May we encourage them thus to compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, and walk in the light of their

own fires? Are *they* safe or *we* honest, while we watch no better the gates of the sheepfold? The press that men make toward sealing ordinances, is a proof that they are uneasy and unhappy, and if we grant their wish, do we answer honestly and fairly the question thus silently put to us, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Do we not rather seal them up to perpetual stupidity, and shall we not have to answer for their blood, in the day that inquisition shall be made for it.

II. Having thus endeavoured to show, what is *not* adequate instruction on this subject, I proceed to enquire, *what is?* In stating the terms on which the sinner can become interested in the Lord Jesus Christ, I should choose to say,

1. *He must explicitly avow his approbation of the law he has broken.* Here begins, under every government, where there has been revolt, the exercise of a right temper. Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. This declaration is found on the very title page of his gospel. Repent, said he, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And what is repentance, more or less, than a cordial approbation of the precept that has been violated?

Hence the language of penitence in all ages has been the same. 'The law is good, its penalties just, and its whole design benevolent. God had not been kind, had he given us any other law, or been

‘willing that it should be broken with impunity, or
 ‘had affixed any lower penalty, or accepted any
 ‘meaner sacrifice than his own Son, as the atoning
 ‘Lamb. O, I am a wretch for having broken this
 ‘law, and can offer no possible plea that shall excuse
 ‘or palliate the smallest deviation from its precepts.
 ‘If God should cast me off forever, he would but
 ‘treat me as I deserve to be treated, and expect to
 ‘be.’ Thus the sinner takes to himself the punishment of his sins, and thus places himself in an attitude, where Christ can begin to notice him, and still be the friend and patron of the divine law.

With this principle we are all familiar. The child sees you pouring your frowns upon his disobedience, and would be glad if you would agree with him in reprobating the precept he has violated. But your authority is lost, and your child ruined, if you cease to frown, till he confesses that he has broken *a good law*. Then, and not till then, can you relax the sternness of that countenance, which frowns upon his disobedience. The teacher, places the rebellious child at his feet, and he must be there, till he confesses the precept just, that he violated. And the same principle is acted upon in all governments that admit of pardon.

So the Lord Jesus Christ, if he would not do a rebellious world incalculable mischief, must suffer the sinner to make no approach to him, till he is grieved for his transgressions, or has avowed his full

approbation of the law he has broken. Then he can be saved, and the law of God be sustained.

Now the whole of repentance may be summed up, as I suppose, in this retrospect of a humbled sinner, upon his guilty and inexcusable violations of a good law ; including however his abandonment of the transgressions which he disapproves. Thus is performed one of the conditions, on which the Lord Jesus Christ, will receive us to his favour, and wash away our sins in his blood.

2. *The sinner must become willing to owe his escape from the curse of the law, to Jesus Christ.* One may know that he has broken the law of God, and that the law he has broken is a good law, and still be too proud to receive pardon on the terms of the gospel. We have known cases when men have starved and perished rather than receive alms. The pride of their hearts would not suffer them to eat the bread they had not purchased. And men have gone down to hell, because they would not cast themselves upon that Saviour, whose help was seen to be necessary, in order to their escape from the wrath to come. Not merely must the sinner see that he is perishing, and that there is no help out of Christ, but he must become pleased with Christ, else he will not feel himself secure in his hands, nor apply to him for life.

It is believed that many a soul has perished, hesitating whether it would be prudent or safe to cast himself upon the Saviour. To do this is faith,

and implies that already the temper of the heart is changed : but all men have not faith. It is by no means certain that awakened sinners have faith. Some may have ; for none can say how early in the process of alarm God may renew the heart. But of this we are sure, that when renewed, it is prepared to believe, soon as the character of Jesus Christ is presented.

Sinners often wonder, and sometimes quarrel, that on making the enquiry of the text, the answer we give them implies a new heart ; whereas the enquiry they intended to make was, how they should *obtain* a new heart. They wish to know how they must operate, with their evil hearts of unbelief, so as to have them renewed. Now to this question we can give no answer. We know of no process by which an ungodly man may work himself into the kingdom of God, but by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. We can tell them to do nothing, that does not imply holiness ; and if we should, they might do as we direct them, and *still be lost* ; whereas they ask us, what they must do *to be saved*. If to this question they wish an honest answer, that will do them any good ; we must assure them, that having been brought to approve of the law they have broken, they must also approve of the remedy provided, must commit their souls to Jesus Christ. These conditions can never be altered.

3 When faith has accepted the atonement, and sin is forgiven, *there must be a life of obedience*, as that which can alone express the soul's continued approbation of the law that has been violated, and the remedy that has been provided. Repentance for sin, and faith in Jesus Christ, are not exercises belonging merely to the first stages of piety, and to be then done with forever. The man who is born of God continues to hate sin, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ till he dies. He does not give the law one approving look, and the Saviour one welcome to his heart, and then relapse into his former impenitence and unbelief. He renews his repentance day by day, and as often makes fresh application to the blood of sprinkling, for pardon and acceptance. His whole life, if he honour the religion he professes to embrace, is filled up with obedience to the law, with sorrow and tears for having broken it, and with the testimonials of a cordial approbation of the atonement made upon the cross.

We know nothing of that religion, which, after taking root in the heart, can lie dormant for years, and produce no transforming influence upon the man, conforming him to the truth, or moulding him into the image of Jesus Christ. God will not forgive sin, and take away the curse, and enter into an everlasting covenant with the transgressor; and then permit him to go into exile from his presence, and be again an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise;

and live without hope, and without God in the world.

He calls in his elect, only in time, however early, to fit them for his presence in glory. And the work of grace goes on from that time till death. They aim at a perfect obedience to the divine law, and go from strength to strength, till every one of them appeareth in Zion before God. They forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those things which are before, and press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Hence there cannot be any very long suspension of those exercises, which are essential at the beginning of a course of piety. The heart continues to be penitent, and believing, and obedient, till all sin is removed, and grace is perfected in glory. I close with

REMARKS.

1. *Let us compare all this with what is sometimes termed the gospel.* How wrong and how ruinous is the advice, that not unfrequently is given to the unregenerate.

We have known when pains was taken to prevent men from becoming alarmed, so as to put the question of the text with earnestness. They must not hear that the heart is desperately wicked, lest they should fear that in all their deeds they have broken the law of God. They must have no suspicion that their prayers are deficient, lest they should

see their need of a Saviour. They must be told nothing of hell, lest they should be afraid of its torments ; nor hear of election, lest they learn that men will not accept of mercy, till they are made willing in the day of God's power.

And thus every doctrine, calculated to pour honour upon the divine law, and reflect correspondent shame and reproach upon the transgressor, must be disproved, or concealed, or nutralized ; and that perhaps by the very men who have been sent as the heralds of salvation to a lost world. We have seen them afraid, lest without design, they should effect some alarm among the foes of God, Hence the monstrous abuse of that text, when any hard truth had leaked out ; “ But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” Ten thousand consciences, that had been pierced with truth, have thus been healed slightly, by a text which God inspired for far other purpose. But when no soothing opiate would answer, and the sinner could not be prevented from alarm, we have known advice to be given that was the most ruinous possible.

We have known when awakened sinners have had suggested them a train of thought calculated to chase away all alarm, by lessening their respect for the violated law. It is plead that they have misapprehended their guilt ; that the law is not so severe as they imagine, and moreover that the mercy of God will not allow him to punish sinners forever.

What parent, say these tender hearted instructors, would cast his child into a quenchless fire? Will God punish eternally the errors of a few years? God will be moved by their tears, and will pardon them, if indeed their grief has not *already* done away their guilt. Thus their anguish of heart is all soothed, while yet there is no repentance.

We have known when the awakened were told, that they were in a fair way to obtain religion, that they must persevere, and hold out, and they would do well. But unhappily their way was the way to death, and they did persevere perhaps, and their alarms were soon gone, and they are seen in the broad way, or are gone to know the full weight of that curse of the law which once hung over them. Had they been told that there was nothing holy in their terrors, and that they were still insecure, till they applied by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, they might have obtained eternal life. They should have known, that they had *not overrated* their danger, nor half estimated their guilt, that God *was* angry as they supposed, that there *was* a perdition, as deep, and dark, and hopeless as they feared. Then there might have been a prospect that they would flee for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel.

The case is said to have happened when they have been directed to a novel, or a party, to chase away their glooms. A journey in the country, or a visit to their friends, the song and the dance, have

been considered a better specific for their pains, than the atoning Lamb of God. Let it be, that these are extreme cases, still means like these have often been resorted to, in order to do away alarm, and sooth the waking conscience. But it will wake again in the day of death, and gnaw with a still keener appetite from the day of judgment onward.

Finally any instruction given awakened sinners, that they may comply with and still perish, is cruel and treacherous. Say to them as Paul did, and you are safe, and they too, if they follow your advice. And they will be as likely to do their whole duty, as any part of it. Christ will bless only that instruction, which comes up to the standard he has given us. O, let not the lips, that should pour out only truth, that should help the sinner to a full acquaintance with his sins, and press his conscience, till he shall feel that he cannot do an hour without Christ; be employed to stop the progress of conviction, and though a mistaken tenderness, bind up the rankling wound, ere the probe has reached its centre, or it has disgorged its putrescence. When the sinner, under the management of the Holy Ghost, is in a fair way to become thoroughly convinced of his misery and his ruin, let not the work be arrested in its progress, and the ear be assailed with the sound of peace, till heaven is once made sure.

The prodigal is alarmed for his life, and grieved almost to distraction for his baseness of conduct,

and has his face turned homeward, but a being meets him, pretending to be his father's friend, and sent to guide him in the way to his house, and bears him into a hopeless and returnless exile! He casts a veil over the rags and filth of the vagabond, tells him of his native virtues, admonishes him to make one more effort to live without his father, and the wretch believes, and turns his face from home, and perishes in his profligacy. So many a sinner, just at the moment when he began to think on his ways, when his sins were staring him in the face, when there was seen distinctly the countenance of an offended God, and when there began to be some thought of repairing to a Saviour, has been misdirected and destroyed.

Instead of saying as Paul did, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," we set about making him happy in some other way. He must mend his life, and send up some prayer, and wait at the pool, and hold on his way;—yes, all this would be well, were he now a believer. But the misery of the case is, he is yet unsanctified, his heart is set in him to do evil, and the controversy between him and God, is yet at its height. He must stop, and turn back, or lose heaven. He yet knows not enough about his sins to render a Saviour welcome. He still dares to stand on the margin of perdition, and has a disgust for holiness and heaven so implacable, that he will risk all the danger he is in a little longer, rather than give his heart to Jesus Christ.

Tell him now of waiting God's time, and attending on the means ; when God's time has gone by these thirty, forty, sixty years, and means have had no effect all that time ! Ah, I am afraid you will amuse him till his day of mercy has gone by, and he perishes in his bondage. The manslayer is fleeing from the avenger of blood, the road before him parts, a post is erected, and a board on it, on which is written in large capitals,

REFUGE

while the finger of a man's hand points to his course. He can only read a single word, and must run while he reads. If he stops to breathe he perishes.

Now such is the office of the gospel ministry, when it comes in contact with a sinner anxious to flee from the wrath to come. It can lose no time in directing him to the Lamb that was slain. It must urge him to a place of safety, and when the danger is over, then tell him of means, and urge him to prayer, and press a reform, and build him up for heaven. I proceed to a

2 Remark. *We may gather from this subject a reason, why revivals of religion, in some instances, add so little to the strength of the churches.* The lax instruction sometimes given to awakened sinners at such a time, even by well meaning men, who aim to be faithful, tends to nourish a growth of piety, that is sickly and effeminate, and will finally add but little to the vigour and beauty of Zi-

on. I know that if souls are converted they will get to heaven, and blessed be God if he will convert them, but their usefulness in this life, much depends on their early instruction.

Let the doctrines be kept hid from those who are coming into the kingdom, and let there be detailed only that soothing, indistinct, and sickly instruction, which has been noticed, and the converts when made, will go halting along to heaven, and the churches and its ministry have very little comfort in them, or help from them.

They will scarcely know *what* converted them, whether truth or error. It was truth I know, for God sanctifies through the truth, but there was so much error mingled with it as to render it, in their own view, doubtful which produced the effect. And having associated the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals, with so much indistinctness of doctrine, they will be likely ever after, to court this same darkened exhibition of the gospel, and finally die before they shall have learned what truth is. And while they live, they will be liable to be driven about with every wind of doctrine, and vex the church, and embarrass the ministry, and pass perhaps from one denomination to another, and finally be saved though as by fire.

They will be doubtful *who* converted them. They were told when under alarm, to do many things toward their own conversion, and they did them, and they were finally converted; but

whether they did it themselves, or whether God did it, they find it hard to tell. And they will give others the same darkened counsel that was given them. Thus God is robbed of the glory due to his name, and the churches filled up with members, who will hang a dead weight upon every revival that shall happen in the church, till they are taken up to heaven, and taught there, what they should have learned that same week in which they were born of God.

And they may never find out in this world, what they were converted *for*. Men will be active in duty, only as they are rooted and grounded in the truth. In all men, truth, or what they think is truth, is the spring of action. Hence some whole churches, in this day of christian enterprise, can be brought to do nothing ; and the reason is, because they know nothing *distinctly*. If you could enlighten them, they would act, but they will not be enlightened. The secret is, they were born in a dark, misty, and debilitating atmosphere, and they choose to live and die in the same. Let some good man, who knows and loves the truth, go into one corner of such a society, and there be active and faithful a few years, till the christians know what they were born for, and that corner of the church shall be, from that time, worth all the rest, in any labours to which God shall call his people.

I know not but we have here *one*, and that not a very inefficient cause, why so many ministers

have been quarreled away from their people, immediately after some great revival. The faithful and laborious servant of God had gathered into the church a multitude of converts, and expected much from them, but had not prepared them to be useful, and when at length he urged them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, they contended with him. If any should consider this a bold suggestion, then I hope they will make a happier one, and take away this reproach from the churches. I cannot believe, that a revival of religion, effected by the Spirit of God, under a distinguishing gospel, will tend to unsettle its ministry. But I can easily believe, that one who knows and loves the truth, may hold it back in a time of awakening, to the incalculable injury of those who are born again, and at the risk of his own sudden removal from his flock. He is afraid to give them strong meat, and feeds them with what he terms milk, but which proves to be poison, and they wither under it, and he is punished for administering it. Thus is fulfilled that inspired adage, "He that will save his life shall lose it; but he that will lose his life, for my sake and the gospel, the same shall save it."

Finally let me say to lost men, haste your escape to Jesus Christ. You stand in imminent danger of perdition every moment. Your ruin is nearer, and your guilt far greater, than you ever conceived. That sinner that has been the most afraid, has never been half enough afraid, of the wrath of

God. It burns to the lowest hell, and when you fall beneath it, your courage will all be gone in a moment. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?"

You see what the terms are, and God will never alter them, on which you can be accepted of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the best, and the only terms that could be offered. They secure the honour of the divine law, the glory of Christ, and the eternal life of the sinner. They are humbling terms, and to reach the case they must be.

Now will you stand quarreling with the truth till you perish? Is this the right course for a sinner? You thus harden your heart, and sear your conscience, and provoke your doom. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." May God bless his own truth, and make it a fire and hammer to break in pieces the flinty rock. Amen.

SERMON 8.



THE MAN OF GOD DISTINGUISHED.

JOHN XV. 19.

“Ye are not of the world.”

It has always been the wish of the enemies of the truth, to amalgamate the church with the world. They gain by this means, in their estimation, several distinct, and important advantages. Hence a gospel is current, that bends all its efforts, to do away the distinctions, between God's people, and the men of the world. The christian character is let down, till all its beauty, and all its honours are in the dust. It is plead that the christian need not differ widely from other men. He may retain his evil heart of unbelief, may pursue the world as he has done, may cultivate the same pride of character, may bury himself in scenes of dissipation, and may be, in all respects, the same man of the world, as previously to his hope and his profession. If he should sometimes be profane, and occasionally gamble, and be habitually hard, bordering upon roguery, in his commerce, and trifle with scripture, and sing a merry song, or be overtaken by any vice that is fashionable, that is not low and vulgar ; all this is

permitted to affix no stain upon his christian character.

He may be in full league with the guilty population of the apostacy, need perform no duties, nor embrace any doctrines, not relished by the ungodly, nor encompass himself with any of that sacredness of character that brings a sword. Thus the man of God is robbed of every feature of holiness, that can possibly distinguish him from the mass of the ungodly ; and the men of the world have only to adopt the creed, and make oath to the covenant, and come to the consecrated table, and the work is done.

They need have no knowledge of that new birth, which the Lord Jesus pressed upon Nicodemus ; need not be translated out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the power of sin and satan unto God ; need not disturb themselves with repentance, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, nor exhibit that transformation of character, which shall evince them risen with Christ, and seeking those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Thus the Lord Jesus is made to martial a band of miscreants. He has the attitude of a rebellious prince, who mingles with a multitude of rebels, enlists them under his banners, demanding neither loyalty nor duty, and winks at all the deeds of wrong and of outrage, which they have committed against the throne and the kingdom. In pursuing the subject, *I shall give a scriptural account of the secluded character of believers, and show,*

that their amalgamation with the world, will both injure them, and the ungodly with whom they are associated.

I. *I am to give a scriptural account of the secluded character of the believer.* Said an apostle, to those who believe in Christ, and to whom he is precious, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into marvellous light.” And said another apostle, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” I have made this long quotation, because almost every clause bespeaks the secluded character of the believer.

Said our Lord to his disciples, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but be-

cause ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore shall the world hate you." Often did he say, that none could be his disciples, but such as would deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow him.

Now the very idea of a church, implies a secluded and peculiar people. Why have any creed, or covenant, or discipline, but that God's people must have a character, and perform duties, and sustain relationships, that belong not to the world at large. I know there is a sense in which they must both grow together until the harvest. God's people must stay in this world till they have ripened for heaven ; but they may be in the world, and still be the secluded, and retiring, and peculiar, and heavenly minded people, which God requires them to be.

Hence to amalgamate the church with the world, is to thwart the divine plan, and join what God has sundered. The purpose of God to give his people at last a world by themselves, and publicly separate them from the ungodly in the scene of the judgment, placing the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left ; speaks plainly that distinctness of character, interest, and condition, which becomes them, and is enjoined upon them, in the present life. In no scripture are they confounded with the unregenerate. Their distinctness is kept up, through the whole series of epithets given them in the book of God ; Saint and sinner, clean

and unclean, righteous and wicked, holy and unholy, believer and unbeliever, godly and ungodly.

II. *The amalgamation of God's people with the world will injure them.* Men have shown great zeal, in proselyting the world to a visible fellowship with the church, as if all that is desirable were gained, when men are brought to put on the garb of piety. But assuredly nothing is gained *to the church*. She receives no accession of strength, or beauty, when the multitudes of the ungodly come to her solemn feasts, and enter the inclosures of her covenant. The army of God that goes out to wage war with sin, and darkness, and misery, can operate with far more efficiency, when none are enlisted but the loyal. Permit the enemy to enter the sacred enclosures of Zion, and what can you hope for, but that in the time of the siege, they will betray her interests, and open her gates to the enemy?

It is when the church is pure as Christ would have her, that she can know her strength, and however small her numbers, can defend her interests and preserve her honours. But when polluted with a mass of unregeneracy, she is paralyzed and exposed. She moves to every onset, wielding a burden, that renders impossible every prompt and vigorous exertion. So the host of Gideon, while it embraced thousands who were afraid, could achieve nothing. The three hundred when separated from the multitude, could do more than thirty thousand.

Our Lord preferred to be followed by a little faithful band, rather than an army of illchosen and ungodly men. He could have gathered into his church, if he would have lowered his requisitions, a mass of Scribes, and Pharisees, and Saducees, and Lawyers. Had he been less austere, to use the term his foes employed, he could have swelled his little flock to a countless multitude, and could have selected from them a soldiery, that would have made him a king, and built him up an empire. Had he but proclaimed, that he would feed by miracle the multitudes that would follow him, he could easily have outnumbered the army of Xerxes, and could have obliged the world to do him homage. But his cause would have suffered, and he could no longer have said, that his kingdom was not of this world.

When the influence of Constantine, poured in upon the church an unwieldy mass of nominal christianity, the result was that the sinew of action was paralyzed. There ensued the dark ages, in which there was swept, from what had been the church, the last vestage of truth and holiness. There was more real light and strength in the camp of that little band, which fled from her sword into the wilderness, than was found in the whole catholic communion.

And the same will be the result whenever the same experiment is tried. Bring down the standard of piety till men totally depraved shall covet the

children's bread, and you have perverted the whole design of a christian church. The equipments of the gospel will no longer adorn his soldiery, nor the Captain of her salvation, lead her on to victory and glory. Hence the design, to break down all distinction between the children of God, and the unsanctified, and lead within the enclosures of the church a band of God's enemies, is assuredly of all the intreagues of the prince of darkness, one of the most daring and desperate. While it pretends to strengthen the church, it makes a deep and broad incision in her arteries, and lets out her very life blood. While it professes a wish to beautify her, so that the ungodly are charmed with her visage, it does but constitute her an image of marble, cold, blind, deaf, dumb, and powerless. While it holds out a wish to guard her interests, to watch her gates, and man her fortresses; it does but covenant with her foes, and in the dark hour of midnight, while her watchmen sleep, gives the enemy possession of her towers.

The men of this world can never be the beauty or the strength of Zion. The Lord Jesus Christ will have a church, that puts on his image, and reflects his glory, that can be a nursery for heaven, that fosters in her bosom his own disciples, and will stand, *herself*, a monument of his redeeming power. She is a city set on a hill, and her light must shine. She must have on, all the features of beauty seen in her Master, and show out to the world every line of

comeliness found in his image. There must be written on her banner, "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

And can all this be, when the church shall be composed of ungodly men? Will they put on the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, or act out the graces of the Spirit, or have any light to spare, by which the darkness of this apostate world may be illuminated? Can their science, and their courteousness, and their high sounding titles, become a substitute for the ornaments of the Spirit? Let monarchs come in with their diadems, and princes with their trappings, and the multitudes of the learned with their philosophy, but who have none of them been taught at the feet of Jesus; and is the church thus made beautiful; Ah, it would depend on who saw her. She would dazzle the eye which could look only on the outward appearance, but would be deformity and corruption in his view who looketh on the heart.

What will the church gain then, when she has opened her bosom to the multitude? May the believer look for *individual enjoyment*, from being associated in covenant with those who are wise and honourable in this world? Will such fellowship ensure to him esteem and respect, from those who shall thus have pledged themselves to treat him as a brother? We answer, *no*. When the men of the world have put on the garb of piety, facts assure us,

that they will by their ungodly conversation bring rebuke and shame upon the Lord's people? Believers will not run with them to the same excess of riot. Hence their scruples of conscience, which will still render them a peculiar people, will not fail to bring upon them the sneer, and the contempt, and the buffetings, of the whole proselyted brotherhood. The stricter principles, and purer doctrines, and higher standard of christian morality, adopted by the real disciples of the Lord Jesus, will be denominated enthusiasm; and whatever they may do more than others, will go to sink their reputation, and cover them with reproach.

What then are we to think of that gospel, so called, which aims at this monstrous confederacy? which would flatly contradict, or artfully neutralize, every requisition of discipleship in the family of Christ, and thus mingle the church with the world? On what page of inspiration shall we find the solitary text, that thus confounds the Lord's people, with the multitudes that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? And who would venture to make such an experiment *on the life of the church*, unless unequivocally instructed from heaven? Alas, the experiment *has been made*, and *is making*, the divine authority to the contrary notwithstanding. Many churches are bleeding and expiring under the operation of this philosophy. It has polluted their creed, and changed their ministry, and robbed them of their covenant, and thrown open

the doors of their fellowship to the wide world. The hedges of the vineyard are broken down, and the result is, that the boar out of the wood devours the vine. I proceed to say

III. *That the men of the world are injured no less than the church*, by this promiscuous amalgamation of those who have no similarity of temper. Let me remark.

1. *A profession of religion increases the disposition, and gives men better opportunities to do mischief*: and this it will be acknowledged is a curse and not a blessing. I know it has been said, that the enemies of the church may be restrained, by the gospel being so accommodated to their taste, as to win them to its faith, and its fellowship. Do away, it is said, those doctrines that they disrelish because harsh and unreasonable, and those traits of christian character that give offence, and they will all rush into the fellowship of the gospel, and be good and harmless christians.

This point the history of the church shall answer. Judas gained admission into the fold, had access to the Lord of glory, and won the confidence of the unsuspecting disciples. But Judas was still a thief and a devil, and became the leader of that band, that broke in upon the retreat of prayer, and arrested, and bore away to the judgment seat the Son of God. There probably was not another wretch in

Israel, who would have pocketed the price of blood, and gone as he did, to seize, and bind, and sacrifice the Lamb of God. The foe had to wait, after he had whetted his teeth for the prey, till one, placed in the very presence of Truth itself, should become sufficiently hardened, through its perverted influence, to administer the betraying kiss, and sell his holy Master. So Julian had done the church far less injury, had he not been nursed in her bosom. It was there his heart acquired that hardness, and his conscience that obduracy, that qualified him to be the patron of that gross, and god-provoking idolatry, which kindled its fires so zealously about the saints of the most high God, and sent so many from the stake and the cross to heaven.

Ah, and before we leave this bloody spot, in search of other facts, all establishing the same truth, I would point you up to heaven, and tell you, that devils could be made, only in that pure and happy world!! It was there, right where God and the Lamb are unceasingly adored, that the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, was schooled, and disciplined, and equipped;—for what? for the greatest usefulness, and the highest honours, like that of Gabriel, had he proved obedient; but becoming a rebel, and carrying all his heaven-taught science with him down to hell; he was prepared to display a cunning, and a prowess, in deeds of wrong, that

have justly drawn upon him the epithet of the *old serpent*.

You may now pass down, from the imperial apostate, through the whole catalogue of baptized worldlings, and tell me, if one of them was restrained by his profession, from doing mischief to the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I know that their initiation into her mysteries, and their unwarranted touch of her consecrated things, have led them to change their *mode* of warfare, and to attack her interests and her honours, in a covert and disguised assault, made in the night time, while men slept. There have been few open and avowed infidels, who have held their place within the enclosures of the church. But they have done none the less mischief, but the more, because they lurked in ambush. The foe who meets you in open day, you may vanquish far more easily, than he who comes under the covert of the black and dark night.

The thought I venture to urge, is, that the superior growth of depravity, acquired under the touch of sealing ordinances, through the perversions of a deceived heart, have made men the *more inimical* to the church of Christ, and the *more desperate* in their attacks upon her interests, and her honours. Hence some of the worst of men have come from the house of prayer, where they had been familiar with all the hallowed objects of piety. No young men have sworn more profanely, or gambled more desperately, or abused the scriptures more wanton-

ly, or sneered at piety more contemptuously, than the wayward youth, who had been accustomed to bow at the family altar. Not that such cases are so common as the contrary ; for a pious education, is the most promising path to heaven ; but when they do happen, they are noticed, and afford us awful proof that truth perverted, is more deadly in its effects than error.

Tell me if God has ever directed, that the church should tame her enemies, by placing them in her bosom ? Is it thus that we tame the viper and the asp ? If such would be the course of wisdom, we have not done half enough. The church should have no enclosures, no creed, no covenant, no watch, no discipline, no barrier that should operate to keep the vilest of men from entering her holiest places. Let us spread at once the net of a loose and superficial discipleship over the whole multitude of the ungodly, and thus, by a single effort, put a period to the church's long protracted conflicts, and save men the pain and the danger of doing mischief. But there is yet room to doubt whether God has prescribed any such means for taming depravity, or terminating the conflicts of his people ; and whether the church has not by this time-serving policy, multiplied her wars and her dangers.

Why will we not look about us, and see what testimony our eyes will furnish us. Who are the enemies of the church in the present day ? Who lead in the attacks made on her ? who unsettle her

ministry? who dilute her creed? who abridge her rights? who rob her of her interests? who, by setting at defiance her laws, and drawing upon themselves her tardy and hesitating anathema, distract her peace? Ah, look once into the churches that are rent with division, and party, and strife; and tell me, if in each case there is not some son of belial whom, like the serpent in the fable, the church had warmed in her bosom, but now has to feel the effects of his venom? Where in the churches is there division, and strife, and hatred, and there is no *professor* warm in the quarrel? A single man, can go out infuriated from the sacramental cup, and spread a wider ruin than a score of abler men, about whom there have never been cast the sacred enclosures of the covenant. O, I wish I had not half the evidence I have, that I announce a solemn and sacred truth that ought to have been publicly announced far sooner. Whatever then a profession of godliness may do for unregenerate men, it does not curtail their power or disposition for doing mischief. I remark

2. An amalgamation of unregenerate men, with the church, *does not increase their means of becoming holy and happy*. No plea has been so popular, with those who have wished to push unregenerate men into a closer contact with sacred things, than that they are thus furnished with better means, and a fairer prospect of obtaining salvation. It has been

the boast of some modern preachers, that under their ministrations, ungodly men are induced to quit the ranks of infidelity, and become christians. They have skill it seems, in rendering the gospel palatable, and men will receive it from them, who would have perished, before they would have received it at the lips of a harsh, and homely, and unfeeling orthodoxy. Not to stop now, to enquire whether these converts are not rendered tenfold more the children of hell, than previously to their having been disciplined ; let me ask whether the means of grace used with them, are thus increased ? and whether their prospects of heaven are thus brightened ?

That same gospel, which would induce the unsanctified, without being renewed, to avow themselves believers ; and thus teach them in the outset to utter a lie ; would not be very likely to teach them much truth, after their being drawn within the covenant. And moreover, if an impression contrary to truth must be made to bring them to the house of God, or within the enclosures of a christian church, it is very doubtful, whether they would afterward listen seriously to the truth. The same pleasant song that charmed them at the first, must continue to hold them, or they would escape like the bird from the grasp of the charmer. They must have a gospel as false throughout, as was that first lesson, that induced them to quit visibly the fellowship of infidelity. And if so, they remain in all the darkness of their former state, with no more chance

of being enlightened, than under the ministration of a bramin, or a mufti. Or suppose your polished and soothing preacher has done his part, and induced the infidel to abandon his creed, for some general confession of the truth of the bible, its doctrines having been frittered down till he is satisfied ; and he has exchanged the school of infidelity, for the church of Christ ;—suppose this done, and the child thus born delivered over to be nursed, and reared, under a better gospel ; let me ask, if that one fatal error, which he has adopted, will not operate like a corrupt leaven, to poison the whole system of truth. You may bring the man to the sanctuary, where is taught the faith once delivered to the saints, and chain him to his pew, and pour in truth upon his ear for half a century, and still you will never reach his conscience, till you make him feel, and he becomes willing to learn, that his heart is alienated from God, and that the profession he has made is a lie. You must teach him that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint ; that he is an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and is not, and never has been, in covenant with God ; and thus at the very first push of truth, thrust him from his strong hold, or he stands shielded against any attack that can be made upon him by the true gospel. Thus in order to make him listen to the truth, or in other words, to furnish him better means of grace, you bring him up to the communion table, and when there you can make him feel nothing, till you show

him, that the incense and the sacrifice he offers is abomination to the Lord.

It does seem to me that when you have made the unrenewed man a professor of godliness, you have placed him where he cannot be taught the gospel. You have prepared him a shield for his conscience and his heart, that will effectually protect him, against any thrust that truth can make. It is then doubted, whether sealing ordinances, are at all likely to become means of grace, to wicked men, who are admitted to those ordinances, while in impenitence and unbelief.

I take it for granted, what is too evident to admit a doubt, that a mere profession does not alter the man's moral character in the least. He believes no truth that he did not believe before, is as much an infidel as ever, and does no duty that he did not ; unless you please to say that coming to the communion is a duty, and this we deny. To do so is duty, if the heart be right with God, not otherwise. Indeed nothing is done, that deserves the name of duty, while God is not feared and loved. And nothing will be attempted to be done in this case, merely because God commands it, but all because consistency of conduct requires it. There may be some attempt at prayer, and greater punctuality in attending upon a preached gospel, but it must all be, from the very nature of the case, a *show* of piety. The profession has not altered the man, either in heart or conduct, enough to give him another char-

acter, either in the view of God or man. How then are his means of holiness, or his chance of heaven at all altered for the better?

Beside there is produced by attending upon ordinances, when there is no piety, a positive hardness of heart, and obtuseness of conscience, which tends to remove the man farther than ever from God. It is trifling with the most holy things, and the man who shall do this, must rise to a pitch of profanity and of daring, that cannot fail to beget an abiding insensibility. It is like the deed of Uzziah king of Judah, who for daring to assume the priest's office, was made a leper, and continued so all his life. God will be sanctified in them that draw near to him. Thus are we driven to the conclusion, that when the ungodly come to the consecrated elements, their means of grace are *not increased*, while their prospects of heaven are *greatly darkened*. I close with one general

REMARK.

How above all price is an honest and distinguishing gospel. In the

1. Place such a gospel *is the only true gospel*. My audience I hope are persuaded that we have a distinguishing bible. God intended, when he inspired his word, to give us, not the means of guessing at the truth, but of knowing it. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Hence

he has made his word plain, so that the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err. Now we should depart from honesty, to either teach, or suffer ourselves to be taught, *indistinctly*, from this plain bible. There must be some base design, when the truth of God, that stands intelligible on the record, is rendered obscure and confused in the lips of the publisher. The doctrines clearly taught in the bible, must be made evident by the preacher; and the characters, there distinctly marked, not be by him blended and confounded: else we can easily be sure, that we have not before us the honest legate of the skies.

2. It is only an honest and distinguishing gospel, *that does honour to the Saviour*. Its grand object is to redeem men from all iniquity, and purify to the Lord Jesus Christ a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The church it gathers, and feeds, and comforts, has on the image of her Lord, stands out from the world, an illustrious monument of his sanctifying power, and tells all the generations that pass by, how holy and how glorious, and how mighty, is her Redeemer. Christ has declared that his people are like him, he is formed in them the hope of glory. But if you mix up the church with the world, and the people of the saints of the Most High, cannot be known from the multitudes with whom they are amalgamated, and you call this whole mass *the church*, which is expected to wear

the image of her Lord, then you grossly libel his character.

If the ungodly, as they look upon this church, are to learn from its character, what is the character of the Saviour; and from its conduct, what is the life and conversation he would approve; and from its temper, what is the Spirit of Christ; then is the Saviour degraded and abused by such a church, and the whole design of his mission covered with reproach. He came to save his people from their sins. Are these then the people he has saved? these worldlings? these profane men? these gamblers? these covetous men? these ambitious men? these proud; litigious, thoughtless, prayerless men? Are all these the saved of Jesus Christ? this the multitude that he has washed from their sins in his blood!!

Thus an indistinct gospel, builds up a worldly church, and that church by its open, and barefaced, and abounding iniquities, brings reproach and contempt upon its Redeemer. But let the church be pure as he would have it, be composed of only such as will put on his image, and glory in being like him; then the world will take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, and he will be honoured in the house of his friends.

3. It is only an honest and distinguishing gospel *that will be useful.*

It gives men the means of knowing their own

character. Its very first object is to distinguish, between the clean and the unclean, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. Then the christian discovers that he is in Christ Jesus, and takes the comfort of it; and the unregenerate learn that they are in the gall of bitterness, and under the bonds of iniquity, and feel the pain of it, and apprehend the danger of it. He will have many a song, and they feel many a pang, under such a gospel; he may have high hopes of future blessedness, and they many strong anticipations of the wrath to come.

A gospel that is not distinguishing, by building up a worldly church, withholds from sinners one of the mightiest means of grace. There is nothing that so much affects men, as to see religion embodied, and acted out by the people of God. The gospel then presents itself to their consciences in a living shape, and carries with it an influence that is irresistible. There the law is, and there the gospel is, right before their eyes all day, in their houses, and in their streets; and they must die or embrace it. But under a loose and indistinct gospel, there is no such example, and of course no such influence exerted. If there should be some few in the church, who honour the religion they profess, which is not very likely under a gospel that does not feed them with the truth, still their influence will not be felt. They will be nicknamed, and despised, and cast out, as sour, unsocial, and austere beings, of whom none

may speak kindly, and with whom none will associate. Thus the ungodly, under such a gospel, lack one of the most efficacious means of grace.

Hence under such a gospel there is no reason to hope, that sinners will repent, and turn to God, and live. Men will not be alarmed till they know their danger, nor will know their danger, till they learn their true character. Hence under a gospel, that does not distinguish, that rears not a pious christian church, that mixes up the Lord's people with the world, calls the whole congregation brethren, and deals out the promises without discrimination ; sinners cannot be said to enjoy the means of grace, will never become alarmed, and will never repent, and will die in their sins, and where Christ is they can never come.

To the people of God, who are under a process of sanctification through the truth, it is of unspeakable importance that they enjoy a distinguishing gospel. Else they will ripen but slowly for heaven, will not enjoy the comforts of religion, nor be extensively useful. To place them under a tame and temporising gospel, is like the attempt to grow plants in the shade. They may just live, but they can neither be vigorous nor healthful. Place the men of heavenly birth, where they can have the whole truth, and feel its full influence. Then they "spring up, as willows by their water-courses." Every day advances them in the divine life. Their religion is healthful and vigorous, and there is rea-

son to believe that they will feel the blessed effects forever. They will be when they die better prepared for heaven, will take a higher station, and shine more illustriously in the celestial firmament.

O, then suffer not a christian *for a world*, to spend his days under a loose and indiscriminating gospel. Advise him to sell all he has, and buy a better gospel, or go where the truth is proclaimed, that he may daily feel its influence, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Amen.

SERMON 9.



SINNERS MADE USEFUL TO GOD'S PEOPLE.

ISAIAH X. 5—12.

“ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so ; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, are not my princes altogether kings ? Is not Calno as Carchemish ? is not Hamath as Arpad ? is not Samaria as Damascus ? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria ; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols ? Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.”

WE sometimes discover, in a scrap of sacred story, a rich and lucid comment upon the essential doctrines of revelation. The simple statement of facts, dissipates the darkness that obscured the ways of God, and removes the cloud behind which

roll the wheels of providence. Let us only read of what God, by his immediate agency, or by the agency of others, has *done*, and we shall find very little mystery in all he has *said*. The *doctrines* are nothing more than the general principles of the divine administration. The moment men put themselves in the attitude of quarrel with what God has *said*, they invariably tax themselves with the necessity of denying what he has *done*. The father who returns to his house, and finds his beloved child a corpse, and still denies the sovereignty of God, proves himself a pitiable reasoner. A doctrine so pointedly illustrated, can no longer be matter of doubt, unless he choose to believe a lie.

The history of the Assyrian invasion, foreseen and described by the prophet in the text and context, is one of those expository scriptures, which illustrate and confirm, what are erroneously termed the hard doctrines of revelation. God is here seen in the attitude of administering correction to his people, and using wicked men as the staff, destined like any other rod to be committed to the fire, when the children are reduced to obedience. If instead of intending to bless the people of God, they mean not so, mean no service to their Maker, but their own elevation, intend to injure whom they hate, all this does not disqualify them to be the sword of the Lord. There is something fearfully interesting in the divine sovereignty, thus illustrated by the very finger of God himself. We must either believe

what God has spoken on this subject, or deny what he has done, and what he is doing daily before our very eyes.

I must detain you a few moments, on the historical facts in the case, and then notice more largely the doctrines they inculcate.

I. *We attend to the historical facts.* God had a church in the family of Abraham, but they were so wicked, that he stiles them in the text a hypocritical nation. He would correct them for their sins, and would employ for this purpose Sennacherib the king of Assyria, the very staff they had leaned on. But that prince would intend no such good to the covenant people of God ; his object would be devastation and plunder. It was in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. He boasted, and heaven knew his impudence, that his power was great, his victories numerous and splendid, his princes, monarchs, and the gods all too weak to resist him. And the worst is yet to be spoken, he threatened that he would do to Jerusalem's God as he had done to the deities around him. How contemptible must he have appeared to him who sitteth in the heavens. Thus the axe boasted itself against him that hewed with it, the saw against him that shook it, and the rod threatened him who lifted it up.

God now resolved that when he had chastised Israel for their idolatry, and their waywardness, he

would curse the Assyrian for his pride. He might live till he had performed all the divine will upon Mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem; then God would punish the fruit of his stout heart, and bring down the glory of his high looks.

God would make him know that he was a mere worm, that an almighty arm, and not his own, had gotten him his victories, and that all his wrath toward the people of God, must meet a final and a fearful judgment.

When God speaks in the text of *sending* that proud and impious man, to chastise his people, we are not to understand that God would command him to go, or justify the motives by which he would be actuated. God does not punish as a *crime*, the very deed which his injunction renders *duty*. It is believed that nothing more is meant, than that God would so order events, that the Assyrian should hope to gratify his avarice and his pride in humbling Jerusalem. The history tells for itself, that the king had one purpose, and the King of kings another, and that God kept his own purpose a secret, from the miscreant whom he used as his rod.

Why was he not sent of God, precisely in the same sense as God hardened the heart of Pharaoh? by the concurrence of events, that should have produced a contrary resolve. The Egyptian's heart was hardened by means that should have softened it: by alternate judgments and mercies, that should have rendered him one of the holiest men that has

lived. So the Assyrian was sent, by an agency that should have rendered him Jerusalem's warmest friend. God had given him victory over the idols whose shrines he had assaulted, and made him rich with the spoil. He should then have honoured the God of battles, and should have come to Jerusalem to worship his Benefactor. He should have been content, when he had been suffered to spoil the temples of idolatry.

But these very successes made him covet the treasures of Jerusalem, and thus had the very opposite effect which they should, and *would* have had, upon a benevolent and holy mind. There is a parallel case in Jeremiah. The church had forfeited the favour of God, and must go into captivity. Babylon must lead them captive, and when Israel should be humbled, must be punished for making war with the people of God. Read the twenty fifth chapter of Jeremiah, and you will have the facts in a shape more interesting, than that in which any comment can place them.

Thus God employs wicked men in the service of his people, while they mean far otherwise, and are in fact the agents of another prince. Still God holds them accountable, restrains their wrath when it will not praise him, and finally does his whole pleasure, precisely as though the agents he employed were his trusty and devoted servants. How calculated are such facts to beget respect for the character and ways of God! How do they corroborate the

doctrines of revelation, and humble the pride of man !

It is a solemn and bitter reflection, that the people of God must be so frequently and severely chastised. That God should term them a hypocritical nation, and the people of his wrath, and let loose upon them the armies of idolatry, to scatter and peal them. But God will assuredly take care of his own people, and though many may perish who profess his name ; still where he has begun a good work, he will not fail to employ the best means and the best agents, till the work be consummated, and the happy subjects are brought home to his kingdom.

II. *There are several doctrines that these facts inculcate, which now claim our particular attention : each prominently suggested in the text.* There is an important sense in which unregenerate men are the servants of the most high God ; He employs them to bless his people ; They mean not so ; While they are doing their work, God restrains them ; When their work is done, as God intended it should be, he will punish them, for not doing his pleasure from right motives.

1. *There is an important sense in which unregenerate men are the servants of the most high God.* This general truth is seen distinctly in the service done by the Assyrian for backsliding Israel. God would send him, and would give him a charge, to

take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

In support of the proposition, that ungodly men are the servants of the Lord, we say, *He gave them being*. He made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil. If men have become alienated in their hearts, still God is their rightful Sovereign. His propriety in them is original and unalienable. If they have entered into the employ of the adversary, still God has given them no discharge from his service. His right to them as his creatures can admit of no question.

And it will not be denied that men, however offensive their character in the sight of God, are dependant on him as their *Preserver and Benefactor*. "In him we live and move and have our being." Said the Psalmist, "The eyes of all wait on thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Thus wicked men are the *property* of God, and are *preserved* by him, two essential relationships between the master and his servants.

And he has occasionally *stiled* them his servants. "I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, *my servant*, and I will bring them against this land." His *anointed*, and his *shepherd*, are terms which God applied to Cyrus. And he commissioned the prophet to say to Israel, "The sons of

strangers shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall minister unto thee—For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish.” Thus the world, from its crowned heads, to its meanest vassals, are constituted the servants of the church of God.

And *he assigns the ungodly their work*, as the master does the servant. The law of God, in all its minute detail, is the rule of duty to every ungodly man. And he has sometimes specified the service, which he required of individual sinners, still withholding from them a knowledge of his purpose. Sennacherib must scourge the backsliding church, Nebuchadnezzar carry them to Babylon, and Cyrus restore them, and rebuild their city and their temple. Nebuchadnezzar was sent to punish the iniquity of Tyre, and was then directed to take Egypt as a prey. Thus have the enemies of God been assigned sometimes a specific task, as the Master decides in what field each servant of his shall toil.

And God sits in judgment upon the service which unregenerate men do for him. I refer now, not to the last judgment, but to decisions which God passes, and punishments which he inflicts in the present life. Nor yet do I refer to judgments, which God inflicts upon the wicked *generally*, but to those instances when he has terribly reprovèd them, for not doing to his mind the very work assigned them. I shall notice here but a single case, Nebuchadnezzar.

zar the king of Babylon was the Lord's sword to punish Israel, and all the nations bordering upon Israel. So eminently was he sustained as the Lord's servant, to scourge the nations, that destruction was threatened to every nation that did not submit to him. And still, in performing the very service for which he was thus made great, he so offended God as to render his overthrow as conspicuous as had been his pride, his insolence, and his oppressions.

I remark once more, in confirmation of the fact that wicked men are God's servants, that *he rewards them for their labours*. For the hard service which the king of Babylon performed against Tyre, in which every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled, he was commissioned to go and take the spoil of Egypt as his reward. Indeed so extensively was that man employed by the God of heaven, to scourge the enemies of Israel, and his own church when they needed chastisement, that there went out in his behalf this wonderful edict. "I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him, and all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come."—"The nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord; and they shall till it and dwell therein." Even Israel was command-

ed, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, and his people, and live." I will mention only one other case, out of scores that might be mentioned, where God rewarded a wicked man, for services done for him. Jehu seems not to have been a man of God, but for the service he performed, in cutting off the house of Ahab, and destroying idolatry, his children to the fourth generation, should sit upon the throne of Israel.

It is believed by many, that the promise contained in the fifth commandment, and all those which secure present prosperity *to the liberal*, are often fulfilled to ungodly men, who from wrong motives, have honoured their parents, or been generous to the church and people of God. Perhaps many a wealthy man in our land, who yet has no treasure laid up in heaven, has received his wealth of the Lord, in reward for deeds of kindness done his people, or exertions made to extend and bless his kingdom. With the measure they mete, it shall be measured to them again. If without loving God, they will feed his children, and sustain his ministers, and spread his gospel; he will, without loving them, fill their barns with plenty, and cause their presses to burst out with new wine. It was perishable treasure that they loaned to him, in perishable materials he will reward them a thousand fold. But the wealth he bestows, since they give him not their hearts, cannot be accounted a covenant blessing. It may be so abused in their hands, as to ripen them

for an earlier destruction. May the mercy of a pardoning God prevent!

Thus do we argue, that wicked men are God's servants. He gave them being, is their Preserver and Benefactor, has stiled them his servants, has appointed them their work, sits in judgment upon the services they render him, and rewards them for their labours. I have not said they were servants in the same sense in which his people receive this appellation. Unhappily it is in a widely different sense. The one accomplishes his purposes with no such design, and is rewarded with the meat that perishes; the other receives the law at his mouth, does his will with design, and has for his reward the meat that endureth to everlasting life. I proceed to the

2. Prominent suggestion of the text; *God employs wicked men to bless his people*. If God would say to his church once, "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish;" why has he not thus published to the world a permanent and established principle of his government. And if *nations* hold their being and their prosperity, on the condition that they subserve the interests of God's people, why do we not infer with assurance, that *individuals* are under the same law. Hence all the ungodly, and especially those who shall die in their sins, live to serve the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This subject is illustrated in the parable of the

tares and the wheat ; they must both grow together till the harvest. It is easy to see how grieved and injured would be many of the people of God, were not his enemies permitted to live. Remove the wicked husband, and the pious wife is a widow, poor, and dependant, and exposed to temptation and reproach ; while her children, the seed of the covenant, are perhaps removed from her, must be uneducated, be reared without the means of grace, and in a world, cold and inhospitable like this, might be constrained to beg their bread. Thus the promise of God would come to the ground.

In other cases, one who is not born of God may be, as it regards temporalities, the support of a christian church. His death might remove its faithful pastor, and the people perish for lack of vision. On the exertions of one wicked man may depend, in a variety of ways, the instruction of a vast number of the rising generation. God, then, will sustain him in life, and fill his storehouse with good things, and bless *him*, that he may bless others, and continue him down to the extremest old age.

It may happen that one who does not love God may be a valuable citizen or statesman. The pressure of government may be upon his shoulders, and a state or kingdom be greatly injured by his death, and ultimately the church suffer. Let both then grow together till the harvest. God has laid his plan, and will not abandon it, in which he has

secured beyond the possibility of hazard, the best interests of his people.

We should have some difficulty in vindicating the ways of God, if the multitudes of the ungodly, especially those who at last perish, had no profitable employment in his world. A wise and good *man*, would not make provision for the idle and the vagrant. He would be unwilling to foster inaction, or waste his property. Hence it cannot be that the blessed God, who makes the wants of a disloyal world his care, has not the wisdom to find them employment in his house. Thus his known character gives us assurance, that he will not give breath and bread and raiment, to beings for whom he has no service in his kingdom, and whose existence and agency in that case would but cumber and curse his creation.

Let us look at facts, and let them speak in behalf of God. They were doubtless ungodly men, who built the ark, in which Noah, and all his, were saved from the miseries of the deluge. Joseph's ungodly brethren raised him to that seat of honour and power which he filled in Egypt. The impious Pharaoh fed the church of God during a long protracted famine. The blood-thirsty Haman elevated Mordecai in the court of Persia. The princes of Babylon procured Daniel his great advancement in that monarchy. So the Canaanites lived and prospered, till they had cultivated their land, and made it fertile and beautiful for the comfort of Israel.

They built cities, and planted vineyards and olive yards, and Israel eat the fruit of their labours. Cyrus sent back the Jewish captives to their land, and Darius contributed from his own purse to build the house of God, and supply the daily sacrifice. Judas marked out the Lamb, and the impious Sanhedrim, and the Roman soldiery put forth the decree, and built the alter, and slew the sacrifice, that atoned for the sins, and procured the redemption of a world. The proud Cæsar reduced the world to one empire, that the way might be prepared to promulgate the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Columbus suffered every thing but death, that he might search out a place for the pilgrims, just at the juncture when they must flee or suffer.

I know that the wicked have sometimes persecuted the people of God even unto death. But this is still the same service, as faith views it. When believers are matured for heaven, their death is precious in the eyes of the Lord. While men have forged their chains, and built their dungeons, and lighted their fagots, they have performed a service as necessary to the accomplishment of the grand plan of redeeming mercy, as when they have housed, and fed, and cherished, and comforted them.

Yes, from the time of Cain till this very day, wicked men have served and blessed the church of God. And the increase and the joy of his kingdom, admits now a foreign agency, as readily as when Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, and the second

temple set up. Men pursue their own inclinations, and do what they please, while God directs all their energies into the same channel, and renders them subservient to the interests of that blessed kingdom which he has established in this world. Not a muscle, a nerve, a passion, or a thought exist for any other purpose ; or worm or sparrow perishes but with this design.

Many a foe of Zion, many who finally will have no interest in a Saviour's love, are employed in accumulating wealth, clearing forests, cultivating farms, and building habitations to accommodate the friends of God, in that day when the knowledge of him shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Hence we read, "the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." And we read again, "Though the sinner may heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay ; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver."

Every storm that blows has its commission to bless the church, and every passion that raves the same charge. The revolutions that have been so frequent in our day, so disastrous to kingdoms, ruinous to individual fortune, and torturing to the heart of sensibility ; though managed as they evidently have been, almost exclusively by ungodly men, and usually with the basest design, have helped to prepare the way for the heralds of salvation to carry glad tidings of great joy to all people.

That scourge of nations, and contemner of human life and human happiness, who lately died in solitude, on one of the isles of the sea, though long the curse of Europe, and remembered with horrid interest by the millions whom his ambition bereaved, and immortalized by the rivers of blood that every where flowed at his feet, still wrought for the church of God. He gave popery a deadly wound, crushed the inquisition, avenged no doubt much of the blood of the martyrs, and though himself a tyrant, was the means of enkindling a spirit of freedom, which will, not long first, result in the downfall of every despot in Europe.

The tract system, that mighty engine by which God is now promulgating the honours of his name, was the invention of infidelity, and was first used in corrupting the world with error.

The wise and discerning can see evidence in the events of every day, that wicked men are employed in serving God's people. When their treatment is unkind, it renders believers humble, watchful, prayerful, and heavenly minded. Thus the promise, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake;" and another promise more ample yet, "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. We do not say, that christians could not be sancti-

fied, in a world where they should be treated only with kindness ; but we apprehend that in such a world they would ripen for heaven more slowly. They would be too well satisfied, and wish no other or better home.

Even the buffetings of the adversary, have been made a blessing. Job was thus made a humbler and a better man. And Peter, when Satan had sifted him as wheat, was a more useful apostle. When John in his vision, was questioned respecting some, who appeared to be approaching heaven from this world, " Who are these arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ? " the question being referred, was answered, " These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. " The idea distinctly conveyed is, that tribulation made them illustrious Spirits. And we have all noticed, in our walk through life, instances of believers, who evidently were making great advances in the divine life, in the most adverse circumstances that can be well conceived of. When they have not dared to pray, nor attend a place of worship, nor enter into covenant with God, it has seemed as if every lash of adversity pressed them on toward their home in the heavens. We have admired the straight-forwardness of their course, when they have wet every foot of their way with tears.

Thus since the revolt in heaven, and the fall in paradise, devils, and those whom they have led cap-

tive at their will, have had employ in the service of God's people. Directly and intentionally, or otherwise, they have served the people of the saints of the most high God, and will continue in the service, while the earth shall remain, and there shall be on it a believer ripening for heaven. And God is so sovereign in managing the affairs of his people, that he asks not the consent of the ungodly, to be thus employed. They pursue their own plan, and he his; but whether they love or hate, are kind or hostile, their highest love, and their bitterest rebukes, achieve for the people of God the same object, and push them on toward their house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

3. *They mean not so.* It is very far from being the intention of wicked men to serve the people of God. So much may be asserted on the authority of facts, and what is more yet, on the authority of God. Sinners have one purpose which they intend to accomplish in every enterprise of theirs, and God another in the decree that assigned them that service. "Ye intended evil against me," said the injured Joseph, "but the Lord meant it for good, to save much people alive." Haman intended the ruin of Mordecai, but God purposed his high exaltation. The princes of Babylon meant the ruin of Daniel, but God would advance him to the highest renown. The infidels of France, while they spilt the blood of the priests, and confiscated their funds, purposed

the overthrow of religion, but God meant a deadly blow at Antichrist. Voltaire contrived the tract system, to proscribe the scriptures, but God designed the dissemination of gospel truth. And when the wicked intention is *less* or *more* manifest, still the case does not widely differ.

It does not as we conceive prejudice at all the position we maintain, to allow, that there are individuals among the ungodly, who wish well to those who love God, and are daily employed in doing them kindnesses. The questions to be asked in that case are, do they esteem God's people any the more because of their piety, or less? or do good to them the more cordially, or the less so, because they love God? Is the zeal to do them favours *increased* or *diminished* because they are partially sanctified? Men may continue kind to them notwithstanding their religion, and still be the farthest possible from intending to bless them, as the friends of God. The most selfish motives may induce them to act; as the christian may be the wife, or the husband, or the brother, or the child, of the unregenerate benefactor, and the instinctive affections do all we see done. And even then it is doubtful, whether there is ever a wish in the unrenewed to do them spiritual good, to advance them on toward heaven. I know of no authority, either from scripture or fact, to warrant the supposition, that any believer ever had an unregenerate friend, who wished him to progress in putting on the image of the

Lord Jesus Christ. What, wish a wider, and still wider separation, and finally an eternal remove from them we love ! urge them to depart from us, be more unlike us, and have less fellowship with us ? and this because we love them ! There would be something strange in all this.

Nor will it be any argument against the position, *they mean not so*, that men are not conscious of this operation of their hearts. The same heart that is desperately wicked, is deceitful above all things. Very few are conscious of hating the character of God, or his law, or his government. You may go to the careless, stupid, prayerless multitude, and only one in a thousand will confess that he hates God, and he, rather because of his orthodox education, than his consciousness, and the residue will most of them be angry, that you should presume to charge them with a crime so monstrous. You may accuse them in the very language that God uses, of having evil hearts of unbelief, of being carnally minded, or of being dead in trespasses and sins, and if you make them understand that all this implies, that they do not love their Maker, and his people, they will resist the imputation in the very face of this inspired testimony. If no charge may be brought against the unregenerate, but such as they are ordinarily conscious is true, we must either find them in a state of conviction, or may press home upon them no guilt of any shape or hue.

If then the doctrine may stand, it is but what

every believer in divine revelation expects, that God will employ his power, to convert to the use of his people, what is or is not done with this view. He would not leave them in a world where, our doctrine true, there are so few to design their good, without some sure promise, that he will defend them, and will by all events, promote their present sanctification, and their ultimate blessedness. Hence the broad fields of promise. “The wrath of man shall praise thee.” “He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings come down upon his own pate.” What a keenness is there in that divine challenge in the second Psalm; “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” The address of God to the tempter soon after the fall, contains the very sentiment we enforce, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” And said our Lord to his disciples, “I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of

his own household." From language like this, with which the bible is filled, we should seem to be justified in supporting the position, *they mean not so*. It is not the design of unregenerate men to bless, directly or indirectly, the people of God. I proceed to say

4. While God employs wicked men in serving his people, *he holds them under close restraint*. Look at the fulfilment of the prediction of the text in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of the second book of Kings. That prince *was sent* as predicted in the text, and his generals with a great army encamped under the walls of Jerusalem. There Rabshakeh in the name of his master insulted God, practised perfidy with the king of Israel, abused and ridiculed the people, and pretended to have a commission from God to destroy Jerusalem. Hezekiah committed the matter to the Lord, and in sackcloth appealed to him to defend his own great name, and save his people. And God by his prophet sent him an answer of peace. Said Jehovah, of the proud monarch who had come to wage war with his honour, "I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me." It was a moment of awful interest. Just without the gates of the city was a victorious army of nearly two hundred thousand men. *Now* it was that faith only could penetrate the dark cloud, that hung over the city and sanctuary of God.

But God had chained that impudent blasphemer to the foot of his throne, and he had now gone to the extent of his limits. When men, in abusing God's people, have enough of the fiend about them, to go on and insult God himself, then his people are safe, for the divine honour must be vindicated, and God will do that himself, most promptly. I should be afraid of no man who would curse me, *and my Maker too*. I have then only to stand still, and see the salvation of God.

That proud man was in the hand of a mighty Conqueror, and here was Israel's safety. "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." That night the angel of the Lord entered the Assyrian camp, and slew a hundred fourscore and five thousand. When Sennacherib awoke, and saw his whole army dead corpses, he returned to his own land, and went to worship in the temple of Nisroch his god, where two of his own sons embued their hands in his blood. When men have blasphemed God, he can easily overtake them, and slay them. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." That impious man perished in the very temple of the god he worshipped, that Jehovah might doubly avenge the insults that had been offered him, on the idols to whom he had been compared, and the wretch who had defied his power. Thus God, while he had that blasphemer

in his employ, was careful to hold him under close restraint.

We infer the same doctrine from the history of Balaam. He would have cursed Israel, because he loved the wages of unrighteousness. And he persevered in the design, while conscience, and the dumb ass speaking reprov'd his madness. But God loved his people, and although Balaam's success could not have hurt them, still he would not allow his impious maledictions to contaminate the atmosphere that breathed through the camp of Israel. After all his pompous efforts, he pronounced a blessing only, and the curse lighted upon his own head. He perished by the sword, and went to his own place. *He* intended one thing, and *God* another, and he failed because God kept a bridle upon his lips.

So Haman was hanged upon the gallows he had erected for Mordecai, and the foes of Daniel were food for the beasts of prey that would not devour *him*. In the bloody scenes of Bethlehem, the very child escaped whom Herod would have slain, and the curse of God fell on *him*. If time permitted I could swell this catalogue of facts, indefinitely, all going to show, how *terrible* as well as *sure* are God's restraints.

But his restraints are sometimes *merciful*. Saul of Tarsus is a happy case. He set out with the fury of a beast of prey, and dragg'd to prison and to death all that loved the Lord Jesus. At

length he must needs go to Damascus, and try his zeal upon the lambs of the flock in that region. But he had now finished his career of blood, and the grace of God arrested him, It would not longer comport with the divine purpose, to permit the prowling wolf to range among the sheep-folds.

And we could give you, had we time, more recent facts, of both descriptions, where *judgment* and where *mercy* produced restraint. Ask the ministers of the gospel, who notice and record such facts; and they will tell you of many a man, who raved against God and his truth, like a mad bull in a net, up to the time when God subdued him by his grace. Or they will turn over the darker page, and tell you of the *sweeps of death*, among the enemies of the gospel, till all your blood would chill. In some fearful instances, a whole gang of gospel opposers, infidel, and hardened, and desperate in character, have perished, in such rapid succession, as not to leave a doubt behind, *whether* God did it? or *why* he did it? Men have found a grave *on the very day* when some impious vow against God or his people was to have been executed, and have roared upon their beds, when they have learned too late, that their sins had found them out. We might not *say* at their funeral, that they had gone to their own place, but verily we *thought so*, and trembled. We have seen them stripped of their property and their influence, at the moment, when it was too evident

to doubt, that the interests of the church required that they should be brought low.

But whether the divine restraints are *merciful* or *vindictive*, they are *sure*, wicked men are governed by the same voice that controls the waves of the sea. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Till covenant love consent, the children of God cannot be hurt in their person, their interest, or their character, by the ungodly. A plan to injure them may be all ripe for execution, and is still as perfectly under the divine control as at any previous moment. Men may gnash their teeth, under the agonies of painful disappointment, and curse the hand that restrains them, but God will not be moved from his purpose, nor abandon one of his little ones, if he must destroy a world to protect him.

5. When their work is done, as God intended it should be, *he will punish them, for not doing his pleasure from right motives.* This doctrine is exhibited with the greatest distinctness in the history of Sennacherib. When the Lord had performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he would punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. So it was threatened Babylon, that she should be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. And all the other nations which were the rod of God's anger to Israel, and accomplished his decrees,

perished for injuring the church. So the nations that slew the martyrs, although they fulfilled the purpose of God, are yet to suffer, and perhaps perish, for that sin.

And all the finally impenitent will go on accomplishing the decrees of God, with a heart that meaneth not so, and when their work is done, must perish because all their motives were wrong. Devils are doing the same thing, accomplishing God's design, without intending it. And now the question is, How is God to be vindicated in this procedure? We have facts in the case still, by which this question can be settled.

First, "he meaneth not so." There was no design in that proud monarch to do the divine pleasure; else surely he would not have so blasphemed the God he would serve. It never enters into the heart of the ungodly to do, what ultimately they will accomplish. And it is a maxim with men, and why not with God, that we deserve neither credit nor reward, for the good we do without intention. Suppose there operate no very *evil* design in an act that works our good, if there be the absence of a design to do us a kindness, we feel under no obligation for the good that is done.

In a dark and cold night, you call for hospitality at the door of some stranger, but you are denied lodgings, and come home, and find your house on fire, and extinguish the flames, and save your house, and your family. Do you thank that man, for

the kindness which his inhumanity did you? Does he, on hearing of the event, feel that you are obligated to him? Or does he have but the deeper sense of his own baseness? It is then a plain case, that God can give his creatures no credit, if they serve him without intention. A

2. Fact in the case must be noticed; "It is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." Not only was there in the heart of the Assyrian, no good motive, but there was a motive positively bad; and still he did the pleasure of God. Hence, why should he not be punished? And why should not all ungodly men be punished, though it shall at last appear, that they have accomplished the divine purposes? "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." One gives you poison intending to kill you, but you have some obstinate disease upon you, and the poison cures you: is he the less a murderer? Was Mordecai indebted to Haman for his advancement, or Daniel to the princes of Babylon, or Joseph to his brethren?

Will it be denied that all unregenerate men act from wrong motives? Then assuredly their motives are either positively good, or neither good nor bad. But a moral agent cannot be wholly indifferent with regard to God and his law. There is no such being among all the creatures of God. Our motives in every action that may be considered *moral*, must be positively bad, or positively good. Hence if you acknowledge that unrenewed men do not act

from good motives, and this must be true or they are christians, then they act from bad motives. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil."

Thus every unregenerate man is thrown upon the very ground, where stood the proud and impious Assyrian. Not that every man is accustomed to sin with that boldness, or has so thrown off restraint, as he had ; but there is in his heart, while God is rendering him serviceable to his people, the absence of a good motive, and the presence of a motive positively bad. And if we allow this, we justify God in his dealings with the Assyrian, and thus approve of the principle on which the last judgment will proceed. I close with

REMARKS.

1. *The sovereignty of God, and the agency and accountability of the sinner, are associate truths.* In the passage we have contemplated, God makes a very bad man do his pleasure, and still pronounces him free, accountable and punishable, in these very deeds. Hence sovereignty, agency, and accountability, centre in the very same act ; and if compatible once, then are they kindred truths forever ; and what God has thus joined, let no man put asunder. If Sennacherib could do what God intended he should, and yet act freely, and deserve punishment, another sinner *may*, and every sinner *does*. I will give you one parallel text : I could give you many. "Him, being delivered by the de-

terminate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." What, did God determine the deed, and still their hands wicked who did it? Just so; or the mind of God had been very unhappily expressed.

Do sinners still ask, "Why doth he yet find fault? We answer, not because sinners do not accomplish his purpose. He never thought of bringing a complaint against them on this ground. He will take care that his purposes be accomplished. But he has still this charge against them, *that they mean not so*. To please God, men must not merely do what he purposes they shall, but do it with an intention to serve and honour him. He has a right to the allegiance of the heart. The meanest parent demands this, and thinks his child disobedient until he serves him with design.

2. *How wrong is that notion, that if the matter of an action be correct, it is of no importance what is the motive.* In the scrap of sacred history that we have contemplated, the whole result, *as bearing upon the agent*, turns on the motive. The Assyrian corrected the Lord's people, this was well; but he meant not so, and this was the source of his ruin. His motive was, butchery, spoil, and dominion; this brought the curse of God upon him. He might have corrected the Lord's people, as he did; and accomplished his purpose, as he did; and been now in heaven, if only he had *meant so*.

Thus is established a general principle of the divine government ; the *motive* is the *whole* that God will notice. If men will be careful on this *one point*, God will provide for the residue. They need have no fears that his decrees will not be done, and that exactly as he determined ; but the motives with which they are done, will decide the destiny of every agent employed, from the beginning of the creation to the last day.

3. *God did not create intelligent beings merely that he might destroy them.* His ministers have been represented, as making this assertion ; or advancing sentiments that must lead to this result. Now the sovereignty of God, as taught in this discourse, leads to a directly opposite result. Here we see him employing men, of the very worst character, in doing good ; makes them correct his people, and feed them, and clothe them, and sanctify them, and save them. And if God can oblige bad men, who do not love him, to do him a service like this, and still leave them free, and permit them to be as happy as they can be, and will at last merely demand of them that their motives were good, none but devils, and men desperately hardened, will complain.

They all have liberty to attach themselves to his family, and be his people, and be served, and be happy. But if they will not quit their sins, will not love the Saviour, and will not serve voluntarily, so good a Master, they must either do nothing, that shall

turn to any good account, or God must employ his wisdom and his power to turn all they do into a blessing to his people ; and is this a hardship ? For my life I cannot see, that in all this God does the impenitent any wrong. Or would it make them happy to know, that on their way to perdition, they had done mischief that God himself could not repair !!

I should think from what I know of God, that he *would do just so*. It is spoken very much to the praise of Cromwell, that he could employ to advantage the vilest man in England. And it seems to me that every good man must be glad, as every angel is, that God has this power, and this wisdom. “ And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever.”

If any would prefer not to serve as the ungodly do, while they *mean not so*, but prefer to do the voluntary service of a child, they may, and this is the very thing we wish, and what God wishes. You need not build a Jerusalem, in which you are not to dwell, or a temple in which you are not to worship, unless you prefer the condition of a slave, to that of a son or daughter. You have but to come in at the invitation of the gospel, and you may in an hour belong to the family of Christ.

God lets you do what you please. And if he turns your mischief into good, this cannot hurt you. Serve him willingly, and he will reward you, and love you. O, can there be a fairer offer ? can there be a kinder God than this ? I should think devils

would be ashamed to complain of this doctrine.—I know it exalts God, but I cannot see, if the life of my soul depended on it, what there is hard, or cruel, or oppressive, or discouraging, in the divine sovereignty. If men choose to say, that God is not sincere in offering them mercy, and that he always meant to destroy them, after making them hewers of wood and drawers of water in the camp of Israel, and that they have only to *serve* and then *perish* ;—if they will give divine truth this construction, and thus pervert it to their own ruin, we have only to leave them in the hands of a sovereign God, and rejoice that he is not the Jehovah they suppose him to be.

Finally this subject must afford comfort to God's people. Here they see all their interests identified with the prosperity of God's kingdom, and he determined to make that kingdom happy, and employing for this purpose all beings and all events. If their enemies would hurt them, he puts his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips. He bids them "fear not," and has pledged his word, that all things shall work together for their good. He will guide them with his counsel, and afterward receive them to glory.

Ye happy believers, my soul casts in her lot with you. The God we serve is a gracious, and a mighty God. He rolls along the spheres, guides the events of every hour, manages the wrath of

man, and the rage of devils, controls every storm, and directs the course of every atom. He is known in the palaces of Zion for a refuge, and his name is a strong tower into which you may run and be safe, whenever alarm comes over you.

It was in the confidence which this very doctrine inspires, that the Psalmist could say, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." A people so shielded, so served, and so beloved, can want only a song, equal to the gratitude they owe their Lord. They may keep at their Master's work, high in the confidence, that he will never leave them, never forsake them. Amen.

SERMON 10.



WRATH CONQUERED BY KINDNESS.

ROMANS XII. 21.

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

A VERY good man once said, “If there is any one particular temper I desire more than another, it is the grace of meekness ; quietly to bear illtreatment, to forget and forgive ; and at the same time that I am sensible I am injured, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.” But this sentiment, be it remembered, could be learned only from heaven. It did not belong to the systems of heathen philosophy. In them it was taught, that to forgive, till revenge had been taken, was weakness. To swear undying wrath, and plot the most summary redress, and sleep not till the enterprise was accomplished, all this was the height of virtue. And above this it is not to be expected that unsanctified human nature will rise. Hence every unchristian land is a field of blood. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.”

At the dawn of the age of mercy, a Pliny said, but had learned the sentiment from that very relig-

ion which he affected to despise, "I esteem him the best good man, who forgives others, as though he were every day faulty himself; and who at the same time abstains from faults, as if he pardoned no one." But it was one from heaven, who had long enjoyed the harmony of happy spirits; and had himself the power to mould the hearts of men into his own image; who came down in all the amiableness of God, and taught the world principles of kindness; that to forgive is possible, and that the meek are blessed. His conduct accorded with his principles. When smitten on the one cheek he turned the other. When led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth, and when nailed to the tree, he merely prayed for those who drove the nails, and plead in their behalf, that they knew not what they did. When he quit the world he made it one of his last acts, to engrave upon the hearts of his followers, as with the point of a diamond upon a rock, the very text I have read you. Its spirit has constituted ever since, and will while the earth is blessed with a trace of his religion, the leading and prominent *social* virtue of his people. It is that feature of their Master which if they do not wear, they cannot *now* be recognized, nor can be known when they come to heaven.

Suffer me to make three inquiries, When may it be considered that one is overcome of evil? How may we save ourselves from the shame and the in-

jury of being thus vanquished? and How may we overcome evil with good?

I. *When may it be considered that one is overcome of evil?* This is a calamity that may doubtless happen to the *good man*, but is a matter of every day's occurrence to the multitudes of the ungodly. I remark then that a man is overcome of evil,

1. *When illtreatment excites the angry passions, and produces harsh and illnatured language.* In this snare unsanctified men are caught daily. Even men of correct habits are sometimes surprised by sudden and unexpected abuse, and rage when they should reason. But in every such case much is lost, and nothing gained. To lose our recollection and temper, and thus be brought down to a level with the man, whom we should rather have held in dignified and christian contempt, is to be in a very uncomfortable sense overcome or conquered. This unhappy result was perhaps the very design of the onset. The foe has gained his whole object, and his antagonist is vanquished.

2. One is still more completely overcome of evil, *when he settles down into confirmed hatred of the offender.* He gives place to the devil, and lets the sun go down upon his wrath. By suffering anger to rest in his bosom, he becomes in God's esteem a fool. His passions have the mastery over him, and

he becomes and remains a conquered man. And as he pours again and again over the insult that at first unmanned him, and thus deepens the tone of his anger, he may be seen in a figure putting chains upon himself, and riveting the very fetters that bind him. Hardly may he be said to wish an escape from his bondage, or to make the least effort to break the chain that holds him. And not the miseries of an Algerine bondage, could more jade the spirits, or vex the heart. It may be too, that the foe was one whom in his calmer moments he would disdain to set with the dogs of his flock. Yet he has done the very deed he intended to do, and glories in his victory. How unhappy, that one should be thus rendered a captive and a slave, by suffering his passions to rise upon him, and bind him !

3. One is overcome of evil *when he indulges designs of revenge*. The divine injunction is, that we return good for evil, that we love them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. If the enemy hunger we are to feed him, if he thirst we are to give him drink, and thus heap coals of fire on his head. By no other means can we so readily conquer our foes. We use in this case a weapon whose thrust they can neither parry nor endure, under which they melt and perish.

But when we take the opposite course, and return evil for evil, we grant the foe a victory. We suffer ourselves to be driven from the delightful du-

ty of doing good to all men, the only post where we can be happy. The foe who invades our land, and drives us from our farm and our home, has not gained a point, to him more dear, or to us more disastrous : for not the family and the fireside, yield us better comforts, than the habit of doing good as we have opportunity. No wealth will buy a luxury like it. Money will purchase food, and raiment, and ease, and influence. But the habit of blessing others with kindnesses, of making glad every heart about us, this is angels food. The recollection of good done, can make calm the surges of adversity, and render light the gloomiest evening. It has produced a smile upon the brow of death.

It is when nothing can hinder us from doing good, that we are like God. He sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust. Now who will deny, that when injuries prevent us from acting like God, we are overcome of evil. We cease then, for the time being, to have any right to say, that we are the children of our Father in heaven, who causeth his sun to rise on the evil and on the good. And what result more painful, and more degrading, could any foe desire, than thus to dislodge us from all the comforts and privileges of adoption.

4. We are overcome of evil, *when the ill treatment of one, leads us to suspect the friendship of others.* If to some extent it should be the fact, that suffering one instance of abuse, should draw upon us the

necessity of suffering other abuses, and the treachery of one friend make others treacherous; still this is far oftener true in imagination than in reality. In the gloomy moments of suffering injury, we are often induced to believe a lie. An *individual* may treat us rudely and unkindly, and he may be the only one in the whole circle of our acquaintance, who would be willing to injure us. The contrary apprehension is begotten by the gloominess of the mind. And we are sometimes so ungenerous, as to believe ourselves abandoned by a whole list of friends, because one has proved treacherous. Thus we are plunged into distress, are ready to say that all men are liars, and by our groundless suspicion, and consequent coldness and distrust, produce the very miseries we forebode. Our apprehensions are the very demons that break the tie of friendship, and dissolve the bonds of brotherhood. They beget distance, caution, jealousy and neglect, and the result is abandonment and hatred. Thus in an evil hour we draw upon ourselves the very miseries we might avoid, and the foe is suffered to inflict a wound deeper and deadlier than he had hoped to. The bonds of friendship are sundered, the peace of the mind is destroyed, the interest of Zion are injured, and the foe sits and smiles in his ambush at the miseries we inflict upon ourselves. We are overcome of evil.

5. We are more yet completely overcome of

evil, *when abuse begets habitual sourness of temper.* When God does not prevent by his grace, long protracted injuries, inflicted by insidious foes, are prone to produce this unhappy result. The spirits are jaded by adversity, and become expert in transferring odium from one person or thing to another, till very soon it can be expanded over the whole creation of God. There is begotten an acid temper, and the very landscape is robed in gloom. The irritated master wreaks his vengeance upon the unoffending slave. The innocent child dreads the return of his illnatured father, and the very wife turns pale, when some foe has kindled anger in the bosom of her husband. The indulgence of one unkind affection, like some leprosy, infuses its poison through the whole soul, The eye it looks through becomes a contaminated medium, and transfers its own disease to every object of its vision. The man had a friendly heart, but he becomes a misanthrope; he did enjoy society, but would now be content with a hermitage; he prized christian fellowship, but he doubts now whether piety itself can make an honest man. How evidently is such a man overcome of evil.

6. One is overcome of evil, *when he attempts unnecessarily a public vindication of his character.* I say *unnecessarily*, for it cannot be denied that a good man, without his wish, may be forced into such a measure. Often is this the very object which

some malicious foe would accomplish. He knows perhaps, what is too true, that the best character will suffer by handling, and when he cannot catch the good man in crime, will compass his wishes if he can so fix imputation, as to force him to go into a proof of his innocence. Conscious that he cannot himself establish the *positive*, he would put the virtue he hates upon proving the *negative*, or of perishing.

He issues his libel, invents circumstances that shall favour it, employs all the truth he can, in corroboration of his falsehood, and where truth fails to fill out the picture, he scruples not to employ a lie. He would try both your temper and your reputation. Screened from view, he would cast filth upon you, and amuse himself and others to see you wipe it off. He hopes there may be some spot indelible, or that you may sin in the act of establishing your innocence.

Now the snare is laid. But calmness, and reflection, and prayer, may easily be victorious. Good character cannot be hurt but by its owner. The tongue of slander may injure for a moment the stranger, but good conduct will invariably sustain good character. And it has come at length to be noted as a suspicious circumstance, when we court the aid of law and counsel to defend our reputation. It was a shrewd remark of Doctor Mather, "The malice of an ill tongue cast upon a good character, is like a mouthful of smoke blown

upon a diamond which at present may obscure its beauty, but is easily rubbed off and the gem restored to its prestine lustre.” “Depraved as the world is,” said a man of long experience, “let them have your character, and though they may handle it roughly, they will ultimately restore it whole as they found it.” But let them see that their attacks enrage you, and put you off your guard, or place you in the quixotic attitude of arming yourself for a conflict with a shadow, and their object is accomplished and you are overcome of evil.

II. *How may we save ourselves from the shame and injury of being thus vanquished?* It is possible no doubt to obey the injunction of the text, as well as any other in the whole list of precepts. There are exertions which if we make, with a proper sense of our dependance on God, will enable us in the most evil day to stand. Let us then in the

1. Place bear it strongly in mind, *That he who would designedly injure us does himself a greater injury.* There is in nature, or rather in the divine purpose, a principle of prompt and powerful reaction. Let one attack your character, and sure as life he hurts his own. Let him spread ill report, and that report will recoil upon his own reputation. He will be considered a slanderer. If one act will not fix upon him this stigma, that very impunity will induce him to repeat the deed, till the charac-

ter he deserves will adhere to him. Thus *he* suffers and *not you*.

Or would he merely disturb your peace, let him but alone, and his own peace is injured more than yours. God can give you a peace, that nothing can disturb. If you must unjustly suffer, God can support you and comfort you, but this he will not do for the man who wrongs you. His, on reflection, will be the shame, and the guilt, and the remorse, of a deed which God will not justify. The wound he intended for you, will rankle in his own bosom.

Now if the man who intended to injure us, has wounded himself, then we should pity him, and pray for him, and not study a despicable revenge. There opens upon us the delightful opportunity, to bind up his wounds, and pour in oil and wine, and we may have the luxury to forget and forgive, a luxury which the whole herd of evil doers never tasted.

Or be it our temporal interest they would hurt, or our influence, there is but this one issue to all the operations of malevolence, the curse lights upon the perpetrators. Their violent dealings shall come down upon their own head. They are taken in their own snare.

2. *If we resist evil, we are invariably injured.* The foe is the more courageous, the more fierce and prompt the repulse he meets with. He exhibits now a prowess that he could never have summon-

ed, had he coped with mere nonresistance. A slanderous report is repeated and magnified, because it has been wrathfully contradicted. The presumption is that when the mistatement shall have varied its shape and attitude, it can be imposed upon the credulous as a new fact, that shall go to corroborate the old. And let resistance be kept up, and soon the insulated charge becomes a long catalogue of crimes, that go to establish each other, and render unquestionable the whole series of alligations. Now it is hoped that the world will say, such a host of imputations cannot want for some foundation in fact. The charge of intemperance corroborate that of fraud and falsehood. The testimony of two liars, when they substantially agree, and there has been no concert, may establish the truth.

Thus charges which are all false, and are multiplied by resistance, are made to prop each other, till there is begotten suspicion that never need have been. And the needless attempt at investigation fixes the impression, that character is crumbling, and that a still bolder push will be accompanied with complete success. Thus by wrestling with the blast, we are liable to be discomfited, when had we lain down and been quiet, the storm would have beat upon us a little, and passed over, and we should have seen the sun again in all his brightness. The foe intended to render us unhappy, and he learns that he has, and hopes most cordially that another onset may undo us. But let

him see that you remain unmoved, that his attack has not even discomposed you, that you are invulnerable as the rock, and he must be the veriest idiot if he draws another arrow from his quiver. Hence said the Poet,

“ Tempest will rive the *stiffest oak*,
Cedars with all their pride are broke,
 Beneath the fury of that stroke,
 Which never harms the *willows*.”

3. *It will calm us in an hour of onset, to feel that wicked men are God's sword.* From him we deserve all the evil that the most malicious foe can inflict. True, men are none the less free agents, and accountable, because they are the rod and the staff in the hand of the Lord. But it would argue a want of submission to parental restraint, should the child seem angry at the rod. It is our consolation to know that God holds our enemies in his hand, directs every wound they shall inflict, and has promised to restrain their wrath, when it will not praise him. He has put his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips, and will in due time, when he has sufficiently humbled his people, lead their enemies back by the way that they came.

Hence when ungodly men would do us injury, it should rather awaken our pity *for* them, than our anger *against* them. We have a divine illustration exactly in point, and conscious ill desert should ever lead us to say with David, in reference

to Shimei, "Let him curse for the Lord hath bidden him." "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" If the men who injure us are to be the instruments of *our* sanctification, and then, unless the grace of God interpose, are to be the objects of *his* everlasting displeasure, be their design never so base how can we feel otherwise than pitiful and kind?

4. *It will be a timely and sweet reflection, for a period of abuse, that illtreatment is among the all things that shall work together for our good.* Trials may come from a quarter unexpected, and from those who owe us the kindest treatment. We took sweet counsel with them, and went to the house of God in company. Be it even so, still faith assures us, that their injuries will bless us, will sanctify us, and help us on in our preparation for the enjoyment of God in his kingdom. This one question settled, and I will inflict no wound upon my adversary. He is doing me everlasting good, and though he mean not so, still I cannot injure him who is constrained to be my benefactor. I will forgive him before he asks forgiveness, and will exert myself to induce him to pass on to heaven with me. And if unsuccessful, still the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," will bear my spirits up through the darkest and dreariest hour.

5. *It should ever be our reflection in the hour of*

attack, that to be like Christ we must not resist evil. “He was led as a lamb, to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” He passed meekly through torrents of abuse. It poured in upon him wave after wave, but he stood, a rock. When they would catch him in his words, he spoke wisely and kindly. When they would stone him, he inquired for which of his kind deeds they did it. When that fiend of midnight betrayed him, after joining in the Pascal supper, and having long borne the badge of discipleship, how meekly he inquired, “Betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss?” Now would we be followers of the Lord Jesus, the track is plain; we must not suffer ourselves to be overcome of evil.

Finally, there is the direct command of God. No precept can be more binding than the text. To indulge a vindictive spirit is an infringement upon the divine prerogative. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” There is a day of retribution appointed, and one is constituted judge who cannot err. In the hour of conflict we have only to refer men to that day. Every wrong will then be rectified. And if our sufferings are prolonged, still the years of heaven will run on till they are all forgotten. A christian is but a pardoned rebel, and may not avenge himself. And all others may well fear to be vindictive, lest wrath come upon them to the uttermost.

With the same measure that we mete, it shall be measured to us again.

III. *How may we overcome evil with good?*
To do this will require the sacrifice of bad passions. The unrenewed heart has a keen relish for revenge. Not the most delicious food pleases the palate better. But this malicious appetite the grace of God must subdue, ere the heaven born principle of the text can be adopted : a sufficient reason why the heathen have never imbibed the spirit of meekness. Parents taught their children to retain anger. Instance the father of Annibal, whose dying injunction to his son was, that he should never forgive the Romans : this precept he must swear he would obey. And many children learn of their parents now the same lesson. They are apt to learn, and they often have precept and practice to teach them. “Cursed parents ! Cursed children !”

But let the heart be once subdued by the grace of God, and the lesson of the text is easily learned. The doctrine is simply this. If one treats us unkindly, we must treat him well. If he defame, let us say the kindest things possible of him. If he hurt our interest, let us advance his. If he expose our faults, let us cover his. If he will not oblige us, we must do kindnesses to him. If he deals reproach, we must practice no retort. If he curse us we must pray for him, if he hunger we must feed him, and if he thirst give him drink. If he smite us on the one

cheek, turn the other. In one word, when he has done his best to injure us, let us do our best to bless and comfort him.

It may be well when possible to do another good in the very article in which he has intended our hurt. This will be entering the list with him, and will bring our virtues into a close comparison with his iniquities; thus shall we heap coals of fire on his head, and if he be not a rock shall melt and subdue him. When we would overcome an enemy with kindness, we make his conscience our ally, and bring him to hate himself and respect us. Then his weapons recoil upon his own head, and his violent dealings come down upon his own pate. We conquer him by love.

But in every effort of this nature we must *feel kindly*. A counterfeit affection will not bear us through. The heart must be primarily consulted in every such act of christian revenge. Else the hypocrisy will be evident, and the defeat certain. When Paul said to the high priest, who had commanded him to be unlawfully smitten, "God shall smite thee thou whited wall," he neither obeyed the injunction of the text, nor was in a proper state of mind to obey it. Not even piety will render it certain that we shall feel kindly under abuse. In the blessed Jesus we have the only example that never failed. He was proof against attack. The only case in which he exhibited the appearance of anger, was when his Father's house was made a

den of thieves : and then he was angry without sin. Let our temper be like his, and we shall find it easy to do right : and to be like him, we are infinitely obligated.

It may greatly help us, when we come in contact with unhallowed passions, to reflect, that not certainly is the man our enemy, who may be tempted to treat us unkindly. When he has done us this one injury, if we bear it with a christian temper, he may remain kindly disposed to us, may become a firm and steady friend : while our wrath and revenge may erect him into a subtle and dangerous enemy. He may have made his onset upon us in an hour of irritation, and may be in an hour, more ashamed of himself than we are of him.

Is the offender an ungodly man, there is a single thought that must prepare us to meet his rage with calmness. He has no treasure in the heavens. He is passing on to the blackness of darkness forever. We shall see him when a few days have gone by, unless the grace of God prevent, covered with shame and confusion. His harvest will be passed and his summer ended, and he not saved. And can we be angry to day with one who is to perish to-morrow ? Can any sensation but pity control us, while we see a deluded man raving on the very threshold of perdition ?

Or is the offender a christian, then how it should shame us to become angry with him. Angry with a brother, a follower of the Lord Jesus ! He could

not intend me wrong; his judgment erred; he will ask forgiveness, before the sun goes down, of God and of me. The followers of the Lord Jesus bite and devour one another! "O, tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!" The Saviour must not be so wounded in the house of his friends. Let me have, I will not say my *religion*, let me have my *reason* in exercise, and I will bear any thing from a child of God. For my right hand, I will not raise it against one who is heir with me to an inheritance in the skies, and is to help me adore the Lamb forever. Joint heirs with Jesus Christ! what a binding influence has this thought upon christian hearts.

REMARKS.

1. How highly should we value our bibles which teach us this amiable lesson. But for this book, we had never learned how to *receive* an injury, or *forgive* one. It belongs not to human nature, untaught from heaven, to invent such a sentiment as the text. Our parents had been fierce and cruel, and they had taught *us* to be implacable, had not the bible been the associate of our home. And how this one heavenly principle lessens the miseries of human life! How many the wrongs it obliterates, and how many the social endearments it begets! Precious book, be thou the inmate of my bosom, till this spirit shall quit its house of clay!

2. This subject will teach us to pity the heathen. Their endless quarrels are because they have no bible. They would let their children, their widows, their sick, and their aged *live*, if they had a bible. They would forgive their enemies, and be meek, and benevolent, and gracious, had they not been without the book that teaches these heavenly lessons. Send them a few of your bibles, and they will soon beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and those vast fields of blood will be transformed into the garden of the Lord. He will accompany his word with his Spirit.

3. How happy the period of the Millennium. The bible will then have its legitimate influence, and there will prevail the very spirit inculcated in the text. In what a noble figure does the prophet teach us this truth, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." You have often read this precious text. How happy the eyes that are not

closed upon the scenes of life, till that sweet morning has come, and all these tumults, that keep this world a wilderness, have subsided ! May some favoured child of mine live to see that happy period.

4. Let us learn, brethren, whether that day approaches. It will not burst upon us in a moment. There will be a gradual increase of that spirit which the text inculcates ; till every parent will teach it to his children, and every child will love to learn. From the family circle it will spread out over the whole land, and render it Emmanuel's land, a mountain of holiness and a habitation of righteousness. Do we see an increase of this spirit ? Do we feel it in our hearts ? Does it go out to view in our daily deportment ? Then the day approaches.

5. This subject will try our piety. Can we overcome evil with good ? Does the tyger or the lamb, predominate in our social intercourse ? When we receive abuse, with what temper do we act ? To this test our religion must at last be brought, and by this and other similar tests, the question must be decided, whether we can be happy with angels, or must make our bed in the pit. Will God sanctify us by his Spirit, and fit us all to dwell in a peaceful happy world. Amen.

SERMON 11.



GOSPEL-TRUTH DEFINED.

JOHN XVIII. 38.

“What is truth?”

THIS question was put to our Lord by the miserable timeserving Pilate, who had no heart to love what he inquired after. He, and the whole multitude of the ungodly in all ages, would have the reputation of being the friends of truth. But when they have inquired what truth is, they are careful to turn away their ear from the answer. This one fatal error characterizes the whole human family, till the Spirit of God sanctifies the heart. Till then, they will not candidly examine the bible, nor put themselves under the guidance of the Spirit of God, nor will love the truth when they know it. Hence to know and love the truth, is characteristic of a heavenly mind.

But the question still comes up, What is that truth, which I must know and love, in order to have evidence that I am born of God? The text would furnish a field too large for a single sermon, and must be diminished. *It will be my object to give you a few general characteristics of gospel truth.* In do-

ing this, I shall name the particular doctrines no farther, than may be necessary, to illustrate some leading feature of revealed truth generally. It has always seemed to me, as possible to know truth *by its properties*, as to arrive by this means at knowledge on any other subject, and have rather been surprised, to have met with no attempt at definition, such as I now have in contemplation, unless in those beautiful lines of the poet, which I quote with great pleasure.

“ But what is truth ? ’twas Pilate’s question, put
 To truth itself, that deign’d him no reply.
 And wherefore ? will not God impart his light
 To them that ask it ?—Freely—’tis his joy,
 His glory, and his nature, to impart.
 But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
 Or negligent inquirer, not a spark.
 What’s that which brings contempt upon a book,
 And him who writes it ; though the style be neat,
 The method clear, and argument exact ?
 That makes a minister in holy things
 The joy of many, and the dread of more,
 His name a theme for praise and for reproach ?—
 That, while it gives us worth in God’s account,
 Depreciates and undoes us in our own ?
 What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,
 That learning is too proud to gather up ;
 But which the poor, and the despis’d of all,
 Seek and obtain, and often find unsought ?
 Tell me—and I will tell thee what is truth.”

I should choose to say in answer to the question in the text, What is truth ?

1. *Truth is that which is consistent with the main scope of God's word.* An insulated text or two, may seem to support what is not truth. By such means almost any sentiment may be drawn from the bible, or from any other book. We could thus prove that, "There is no God:" "Thou shalt not surely die:" "Thou shalt hate thine enemy:" "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Now you may fill a book with such insulated texts, but it would be all false; a lie couched in bible language, but not the less a lie.

All the false doctrines, that have spread their plagues through this ill fated world, have thus originated, and been thus sustained. To him who is willing to understand it, the bible is plain; but to one who prefers delusion, and wishes to believe a lie, because he has no pleasure in the truth, the bible presents it in that disconnected form, that he may wrest it, if he please to his own destruction.

Still it will prove true, that when a tortured text has been made the basis of a false doctrine, that doctrine will not be sustained by the main drift of inspiration. It cannot be supported by other texts, without giving them a false and forced construction, and the whole system when thus built will be a baseless fabric. There will be many texts in the very face of the false doctrine, and in a greater number still its falsehood will be implied. But it will not be thus with truth. When you have fairly

gathered any doctrine that God meant to teach, from any part of his word, you will find it asserted in other parts, implied in others, and in none contradicted.

Now apply this rule to any one doctrine, or system of doctrines, and it will assuredly assist you in discovering what is truth. The saint's perseverance, for instance, is clearly taught in this text, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way; though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand;" and in this, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" and in this, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ;" and in this, "The righteous shall hold on his way."

Now the doctrine thus taught in a number of texts, of which I have quoted but few, has implied support in a far more numerous class still. All those texts which speak of heaven, as the final home of believers, imply the doctrine; all those which make regenerated men the Saviour's reward; the promises made to believers, of help in the time of need, of victory in the hour of conflict, of escape from temptation, of light in darkness, of strength

equal to their day, of guidance through life, and of hope in death. It is implied in that assurance of salvation which Paul had, and which every believer may have ; in the terms of the covenant, which is said to be *everlasting, well ordered in all things and sure* ; and in the very nature of holiness, which immediately, on taking existence in the heart, seizes heavenly objects as its own inheritance. And the doctrine thus supported *directly*, and by *extensive implication*, is no where contradicted.

Now bring any doctrine to this test, and if thus supported it is true. Upon the truth, light will shine from almost every page of inspiration. But we must be *candid* and *diligent*, or we may not hope to be enlightned. If men go to the Bible, determined to support a scheme of their own, it is by no means certain, that there is any lie, so obvious to detection, that it may not be thus sustained : for it is threatened, “For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie ; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” If you still ask, What is truth ? I answer again,

II. *Truth is that, after which men inquire humbly and prayerfully.* That was a good ejaculation of the Psalmist, “Open thou mine eyes, and I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law.” All bible-truth is in its very nature humiliating to a sinner ;

hence there must be humility, or there can be here no possible evidence of that candour, which is necessary in researches after truth of any kind. And we shall pray while endeavouring to acquaint ourselves with God's word, because a desire to know the truth implies a heart to love it, and this implies a spirit of prayer.

All those men who have searched the most profoundly, after the mind of God, have been men of prayer. They made ample proficiency in their inquiries, because in the outset they imbued their souls with the spirit of the gospel. In answer to their prayers they had the teachings of the Spirit of God. It is only a mind opened by the Sanctifier for the reception of truth, joined to a heart softened and subdued by him. that can have any very exalted pleasure in becoming acquainted with those holy objects which the truths of God present. He will have a low opinion of his own wisdom, and will feel his need of divine aid at every stage of his progress.

It is recorded of one good man, who is known to have made uncommon proficiency in his researches after truth, that he studied his bible every day upon his knees. And of every good man it must be true, from the nature of the case, that he studies the word of God with his eye directed toward heaven for divine teaching. Between truth, and a humble prayerful spirit, there is that indissoluble connexion, that will justify the inference, that where the

one is, there we may with great probability look for the other.

But the search for error requires no humility, and no prayer. He who forms his system out of his own heart, and goes to the bible to have it sustained, will be too proud to let the testimony of inspiration alter it. He feels no need of light and asks none; would be afraid to pray, lest God should convince him that his favourite system is a lie. Hence inquire, would you know what truth is, what are the doctrines that men learn on their knees; feeling themselves ignorant, and poor, and blind, and naked, and in need of all things. And would you know what is not truth, inquire what doctrines are brought to the bible to be compared with it, with a pride and a selfsufficiency, that scruple not to hew down any section of that book that will not quadrate with the favourite system; and prepared to proscribe the whole, if it assume any authority over the decisions of human reason. Do you still ask, "What is truth?" I answer,

III. *Truth is that which produces changes of character for the better.* God has told us plainly what is the design of his word, It was given to teach us, "that denying ungodliness, and every worldly lust, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present evil world." Such then is the effect, that it is to be expected truth will have upon human character; hence that which has

this effect is truth. It was the prayer of our Lord for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth." And who will deny, that men are fitted for heaven, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. This fact admitted, if we can ascertain what doctrines have been the means of making men better, we shall have learned what the truth is.

Where then do we look for the most frequent conversions ? under what system ? and under what men ? The question amounts to this, What doctrines have been preached, and believed, where the Spirit of God has the most frequently, and the most powerfully operated, in producing revivals ? The men who have been the most favoured, in seeing the work of God prosper under their ministrations, and have turned many to righteousness, What is their creed ? Do they deny the atonement ? or do they place it at the foundation of all human hopes ? Do they acknowledge the divine nature of Jesus Christ ? Do they consider man so depraved, that his sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord ; and his obstinacy such, that God must take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh, or there will be no repentance, and no obedience ? Do they believe, or not, that God is a Sovereign, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will ? Do they credit the fact, that God has prepared a quenchless fire, and a never dying worm, for the punishment of the finally impenitent ?

We do not deny that in some instances congregations have become acquainted with the truth, by other means than through the ministry placed over them, and that the truth thus acquired has produced awakenings; nor yet, that the *bible alone* has been the means of saving men, notwithstanding the opposing influence of a false gospel. We ask what are the doctrines that have generated alarm, and induced men to fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel?

Will it be denied that these revivals, so called, have made men better? It will be admitted, that they have made some men worse, that the truth long and daringly resisted, has produced not a few of the most hardened and desperate men, that have ever lived. There *have been* sore and alarming instances of relapse, that have cast whole churches into deep distress.

But, this admitted, have not revivals produced very noted and numerous cases of reform? Have not the profane, the intemperate, the proud, and the false, been rendered virtuous, by some power that operated at these seasons? Now if it was God who wrought, it was truth he used; and whether you own or not, that the power of God produced the changes witnessed, you will hardly deny that truth was the means: for it is not more unscriptural, than unphilosophical, to believe that falsehood will generate virtue.

Ascertain then whether the reception or the

rejection of any given doctrine, or system of doctrines, is more generally attended by a change of character for the better, producing sobriety, morality, and benevolence, and the fact will aid you in your search after truth. I know there is much boast of morality, where doctrines are current, that are plainly at war with what the bible seems very clearly to teach, but I know too that such boast is vain. The virtue that thrives under error is proud, and selfish, and cold, and often very malignant, and cruel; makes but few and small sacrifices, and is at the best a mere polished and civilized idolatry. It may drop a tear over the sufferings of the *body*, and be prompt to cure temporary distress; but can look with the indifference of a statue at the ruins of the *moral world*, and feels not a pang or utters a groan, at the sight of six hundred millions of souls sinking to perdition, and degraded and miserable all the way thither. It cares not who suffers through ignorance of God, or is miserable through lack of vision. We do not deny, if they like this picture, that such a morality *does prevail* where men have turned the truth of God into a lie.

But let us make *a high regard to the best interests of men*, the leading feature of morality, and then inquire where we find it. Does such a morality thrive under what is termed evangelical truth, or where this system is scouted, and libeled, and proscribed? If we see men, on embracing these doctrines become *better*, then believe them true, but if

worse, then you may believe them a lie. Do you ask me still, "What is truth?" I answer,

IV. *Truth is that which distresses, and often offends ungodly men.* The character of God, and his people as far as they are like him, is built on the truth. But unholy beings, men and devils, have a character bottomed upon falsehood. They feel and act as they do, because in their esteem a lie is the truth. Hence the truth is at war with their character, their conscience, their pleasures, and their hopes. It holds before them a mirror in which they appear ugly to themselves, and see their need of a better character, in order to be accepted of God. It shows them that their strong hold is a house of straw. It exhibits them as playing the fool with their own best interests. A mad man, who in a paroxism of his disease has butchered his family, and half dispatched himself, and has waked to consciousness in the very act of suicide, is scarcely a sorer picture of wretchedness and ruin, than a sinner upon whose conscience there has been poured suddenly the light of truth. It shows him that he is labouring hard to fit himself for irrecoverable ruin; and is heaping treasure together for the last days. His character must be altered, or the light shut out that shows him its deformity.

Now assure yourselves what doctrines bring ungodly men into this condition of distress, and you learn what is truth. On the other hand, if you will

ascertain what doctrines offend and grieve the *good man*, you will learn what is *not* truth. Let me appeal to that part of my audience, who have yet no hope that they are born of God, but who have frequently felt alarm. On that night when you went home so unhappy from the place of worship, and wet your couch with tears, and roared and was in anguish all night, what doctrine had been exhibited? Was it the entire depravity of the heart? or was it an attempt to prove, that you are not that lost and ruined being, which this pitiless orthodoxy would render you? Was it divine sovereignty? or a discourse that went to show, that when God had built the world, he placed it without the limits of his empire, and left it to govern and watch over itself? Was it the doctrine of decrees? or an attempt to show that a sparrow may fall to the ground, and God *not* know it, and that the hairs of our head are *not* numbered? Was it election? or was it an effort to prove that the Father has not given any of our race to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that if he has, they may not come to him, and that many who do come to him may be cast out? Was it the doctrine of ever during future punishment? or a train of reasonings that went to prove that the great gulf had been bridged over?

Go on, my audience, and apply this rule to other doctrines, to whatever extent you please, it will help you greatly in determining what is truth, Let us suppose a case, or rather state one that *has* hap-

pened. A sinner lies on the dying bed. There goes to him one in the character of a minister of Jesus Christ. But he tells the dying man, that he has no occasion to be much alarmed, that his heart is not *radically* polluted, that he must receive baptism, and forgive his enemies, and be willing to die, and all will be well. He is baptized!! The minister goes on; God is merciful, and Christ has died for sinners: there can be no doubt but the dying man will be soon in Abraham's bosom.—He retires, and another man, with far other views, takes his chair by the dying bed. He assures the poor man, that he has probably come to his last hours with a heart at enmity with God, and so obstinate in its enmity, that none but a power divine can subdue it; and that it must be sanctified very soon, or he perishes forever. Still God has made no promise that lays him under obligation to effect this change, hence the man's eternal life hangs upon uncovenanted mercy. True a Saviour has died for sinners, and God is merciful, infinitely merciful, but that atonement and that mercy, have conditions annexed, which must be complied with, or they avail nothing. The sinner must repent and believe in Jesus Christ; and God will give repentance unto life to whom he will, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

I have thus given the *substance* of the instruction administered by the two legates. The dying man continues impenitent. Now *who* of the two

gives him comfort, and *who* alarms and distresses him? He who gives comfort to one who is out of Christ, must deal in lies; he who distresses him, though he may not use the mildest, best language, has the presumption in his favour, that he pours in truth upon an ungodly mind. God requires that we say to the wicked, that it shall be ill with them, and a message like this will not give them comfort, unless it prove the means of their conversion. Hence the irresistible presumption is, that he who gives *pain* to the dying sinner, and not he who gives *comfort*, makes use of *truth*.

And what thus gives *pain*, is very liable to give *offence*. Men are proud, and when the truth from the necessity of the case, bears against their character and conduct, they scowl. You cannot offer them mercy in the style of scripture, but you convey to them a threatening, if they believe not. The gospel intrudes upon the sinner's pleasures, and pours unwelcome light upon his conscience, and, as he esteems it, degrades his character; tells him of a judgment he is loath to think of, and predicts a doom he hates to anticipate, a hell whose fires he would gladly put out, where there await him weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Ah, the truth tears from the sinner all his hopes of heaven, pulls down about his head his refuge of lies, breaks his covenant with death, and annuls his agreement with hell, and leaves him the prey of despair, till he raises one believing look to the hills whence his help cometh;

and sure as life, all this, if it does not save him, will *offend* him.

If then you would test the truth of a doctrine, propose it to ungodly men, and watch if it gives offence. What effect has divine sovereignty, decrees, and election, upon such men? If they offend, the presumption is that they are true. Go to that man, standing in the door of that grog-shop, reeling and cursing, with a glass in his hand; and name one of these doctrines; will it please or offend him? will it calm or enrage him?

Let me take another view. Christians have been much of their life ungodly. Did they generally love these hard doctrines before conversion or since? The doctrine of universal salvation; do men more generally believe this doctrine before they are regenerated, or afterward? You may thus bring to the test any doctrine or system of doctrines. That individual truth, or system of truths, which pleases more generally unsanctified men, is more likely to be false than otherwise. Error loves its child *depravity*, and the child its mother.

I know that to make this experiment fairly, you must arrest attention. Men may be too stupid to be distressed by the truth, and may hold the truth in unrighteousness. The mass of impenitent sinners in our orthodox congregations and who could not be persuaded to receive, and support, a loose and ungodly ministry, are on the side of truth, because they are thoughtless, or consider it disreputable to renounce the creed of their fathers. But every pe-

riod of awakening draws out enmity more or less, because it brings men to think. I doubt not but there is sufficient hatred to truth, in New England, to explode the gospel, and its ministry, and the bible, and seal up the doors of every sanctuary, if God should remove restraint, and wicked men be generally aroused to thought, and see how at war truth is, with their heart and their life.

There may be a kind of general acknowledgment of the truth, where it would be most cordially hated, were it so brought home to the conscience as to be strongly felt. Then it becomes manifest that the truth had previously floated merely upon the surface of the mind, and had not been opposed, because it had not been felt. Do you still inquire, "What is truth?" I answer,

V. *Truth is that, which is consistent with itself, and inconsistent with all error.* Should two men appear in a court of Justice to bear witness to the truth, their testimony would agree, without any previous consultation. There might be many apparent discrepancies, but they could all be explained satisfactorily. Say it is a case of assault, that happened several months since. One affirms that the attack commenced in a house, on the evening of such a day; at the hour of eleven; the other places the scene of attack without the doors of that house, at the hour of twelve, and names another day of the week, another day of the month, and even

another month. But the court perceives in a moment, that the attack might commence in the house, and be renewed without, and that one of the witnesses might mistake wholly the time. Hence finally their testimony may substantially agree.

Now although we would not place the seeming discrepancies of the bible on the same footing, for here there could be no mistake, yet there *are many apparent discrepancies*. One apostle testifies that the *thieves*, implicating both, reproached the suffering Redeemer; another fixes the charge upon *one only*; while the truth probably is, that at the first both reviled, and finally but one, the other being sanctified; and the evangelists record, what they saw and heard at different times. So when Saul was addressed by the Saviour on his way to Damascus; one account is, that those who journeyed with him heard the voice but saw no man; while another asserts that they heard not the voice of him that spake. The truth no doubt is, that they heard a sound, but did not distinguish what was spoken. Many such apparent discrepancies are found in the sacred volume, serving however to corroborate its testimony. If men had agreed to lie, they would have been careful to have a perfect harmony in their statements, especially when their testimony was voluntary and deliberate. Truth is consistent with itself.

Now let us make application of the rule. If it be correct, then, an entire change of heart is neces-

sary only on the supposition that the heart is totally depraved ; if regeneration be entirely the work of God, then man does none of it ; no promise could insure heaven to the believer, and still he be lost ; if God foreknows an event, that event is certain ; sin requires an infinite atonement, if in its nature it tends to infinite mischief : thus one truth is consistent with another.

But between truth and error there is no such harmony. No court can reconcile a true and false witness. Error thwarts the track of truth, and its own track. It is a body opaque, that cannot light its own way, while truth surrounds itself with the light necessary to guide its course.

Let us look at one case. I take this position ; God is the implacable enemy of sin ; now reconcile this with the idea that there is neither a judgment nor a hell. It then follows, that the vilest men are often taken to heaven first : the people of the old world were at rest in the bosom of the Lamb, while Noah and his family had yet to weather many a dark and dreary night upon a shoreless ocean ; the Sodomites went all up to heaven, while Lot was left to wander upon the mountains ; Judas was glorified before John ; and all those who shorten their lives by debauchery are sooner at rest than the virtuous. To such results are we driven when we would reconcile truth with error.

Take another case. The heart till renewed in regeneration is void of moral goodness. Now re-

concile this with the idea that the unsanctified do any thing pleasing to God. The heart gives every moral action its character. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Hence a bad heart will give every moral act a bad character: the motives by which we act are in the heart, but if the heart of the sons of men be full of evil, then every motive is bad; hence every deed instigated by such motive is bad. How then can sinners do any thing pleasing to God? Thus truth and error are at open war. They must not mingle in the same system, nor unite in governing the same heart, cannot have a place in the same bible, can have no fellowship, no harmony. They are the two contending powers, that have so long distracted this fallen world, and the war will continue, without truce or treaty, till one or the other is exterminated; and which must perish, it is not difficult to decide.

And I might add, that error is equally inconsistent with itself. There is no such thing as a system of error. I could as soon conceive of harmony made up of a combination of discords. Hence we need not wonder that those who depart from the simplicity of the gospel, are driven about with every wind of doctrine. It *must* be so. They can never so mend up their system, that it shall suit them; but will alter it, and alter it, till all truth is excluded, and it has become a scheme of infidel morality. So we conceive of some comet, that will not be governed by the laws of gravitation, and wanders from

system to system, till no other world can be safe in its vicinity, and no sun will lighten it, and finally it goes out beyond the reach of suns and there is in reserve for it, the blackness of darkness forever. Ah, how infatuated men have been, when they gave up one doctrine of the bible, and supposed that it would not essentially alter their creed! By that act they cast themselves off from their anchorage, after which there was no guessing, before what storm they would be driven, into what latitude borne, or upon what clift be dashed, and broken, and destroyed. O that men would be wise *sooner*, and fall on their knees, the moment they have taken up their pen to blot and interline their creed. It is only in the edifice of truth, that there can be a perfect unity from the foundation to the top stone. Do you still inquire, "What is truth?" I answer,

VI. *Truth is that which will stand the test of a close examination.* A man reports to you a fact which he witnessed. You have some doubt, and demand particulars. He goes on to state when, and where, and how the event transpired. He tells you why he was there; who else were present; the hour of the day; how long he was there; how many were concerned in the matter;—in a word, he will readily answer any question you put to him. And he makes every statement fearless of contradiction.

Now a lie will not stand this pressure. Ask

the man who comes to you with *a false report* all these particulars, and you will soon perceive that although he has marked out several steps, yet beyond these he moves with hesitancy. He has the particulars of the lie to fabricate. Now all this will apply to gospel truth. Take an example.

Total depravity is proved by this text, "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and this, "There is none that doeth good, no not one;" and this, "Every imagination of the thought of the heart is evil, only evil continually;" and this, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil."

Now let us see if this doctrine will stand the test of a close examination. If it be true, men will be seen to act very basely; and this we see. If it be true men will need restraint, and will act the worse, the less restrained; and this is fact: "Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst." If it be true, nothing that the sinner does will please God: "Without faith it is impossible to please him." If it be true, God must renew the heart: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If it be true, the change will be great: "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." If it be true, God must hate our native character: "He is angry with the wicked every day." If it be true, they will not relish it; and such is generally the fact. You may go on, and press the doctrine as much as you please, or any other doctrine in the system of truth, and it will

stand. Not the surf-beaten rock, that lines the shore of ocean, stands half so firmly as the truth. It will live and flourish, and will still be truth, when all its opposers have perished, and every rock is rolled from its bed.

And the truth will stand firmly without the aid of sophistry. It is when you attempt to establish a lie, that you must use false arguments. Hence there never was an orator, who could ably support the side of an argument, that is opposite to that of truth and righteousness. Take an example. He tries to prove that no plan guides the divine operations. But there are a thousand facts, and the whole bible, and the best conclusions of reason, all confronting him. Hence he makes no advances, till he affixes to the doctrine he would oppose, some odious name, calls it election, and suggests some mischievous consequences if it prove true, and casts about the hated doctrine a cloud of darkness and mystecism, and then, when his hearers are highly impassioned, and so blinded by rage, as not to see the weakness and wickedness of the orator, he plies his false and worthless arguments. It would destroy man's free agency. It would render the invitations of the gospel insincere. It would excuse every violation of the divine law. Now there is not one of these arguments worth a straw, if he had a candid auditory to enlighten. But one may as well attempt to convince a rock that it is hard, as to pour truth upon a mad congregation. The ear that

should hear it is deaf, and the eye that should see it is blind, and what is worse than all, the heart that should feel it is biased.

But let one attempt to prove that God *has* a plan, and guides all his movements by it, and he may use solid and honest arguments. He may appeal to the unequivocal testimony of inspiration; to the attributes of God; to the impossibility of a wise intelligence operating without a plan; or to matters of fact, which show unequivocally that such a plan exists, and is going into rapid and successful operation. And when he has exhausted his substantial arguments, he need proceed no farther, for the truth is proved, and will stand without the prop of sophistry. And the same is true relative to any and every other doctrine of the bible. A mere school-boy can reason better in support of truth, than the wisest philosopher, when he would prove the truth of a falsehood. The very father of lies himself could never defend successfully any one doctrine of his creed. You still ask me "What is truth?" I answer,

VII. *Truth is that against which all oppositon is weak.* It must have opposers, in every world where there is depravity. But the Patron of truth is the mighty God; hence all opposition is insignificant. Truth could never be checked in its progress, by all the terrors of the dungeon, or the agonies of the stake and the cross. Every heretic that was

executed during the reign of intolerance, promoted the triumph and widened the spread of truth. At every scene of persecution, other hearts were sanctified, and other witnesses rose, as it were from the ashes of the martyred, to erect again, higher and still higher, the standard of the cross, and vindicate, more and more triumphantly, the honour of truth and the glory of God. Opposition to truth warms its advocates, and produces a reaction that carries the war back into the territories of the foe, eclipses the brilliancy, and humbles the triumph of his boasted victories.

Were it not for the reluctance we feel that men should undo themselves forever, it could be wished, that error might ever have warm and able advocates, to call into action the friends of truth, and show the world that it has a light of its own, that can eclipse and consume every wandering star that would thwart its track. In its very nature truth is invulnerable and eternal. Its author is God, whose character and whose throne is built on it, and who has pledged all in him that is sacred, that it shall exist and flourish commensurate with himself.

Oh, that its enemies did but know their destiny. When they shall have done their best, and cried aloud to their gods, and leaped upon their altars, and wounded themselves, till they are covered with their own gore ; then God will speak, and fire will come from heaven to testify to his truth, and devour

its adversaries. No warfare has ever been so unpromising as theirs. The victory has never hung in doubt an hour. When the foe has been intrenching himself, and was proud of his forces, and sure of the victory ; and the friends of truth lay on their faces between the porch and the altar, and could only say, " Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach ;" even then, angels were not afraid, nor God afraid, nor should faith have been afraid, that the truth might suffer. Do you still ask me, " What is truth ?" I answer,

VIII. *Truth is that which never becomes obsolete, but is rendered the more illustrious by use.* It may at times seem obscured, and likely to become extinct, in some limited territory of this world, but it will come into credit again, and will pervade the very ground from which it seemed excluded. The human heart does not love it, and would destroy it, and has been making efforts to this effect, ever since the apostacy ; but the conscience, to whatever extent it has light, is on the side of truth, and often exerts an influence to give it countenance and currency, where it would otherwise be without a friend. Its light may be eclipsed, but cannot be extinguished. So the sun may suffer some little world to roll athwart its beams, and cut off a few fragments of its light from some other world, but the sun when eclipsed is not extinguished. While the ignorant multitude stand appalled at the brood-

ing darkness, he emerges from behind the screen, and rolls and shines with unbroken velocity and undiminished lustre.

Some have believed, and many have hoped, that the scriptures would one day become obsolete, and men be released from its obligations, and its terrors. Poor souls, they think it a great grievance that there should be any sun to light the moral world. They would it were one unbroken night through all the territories of intellect. So we have known when the thief and the robber cursed the opening day as a nuisance, and were not ashamed to wish, that the sun might cease to shine, and the moon and stars withhold their light. But the prayer of the thief will not put the sun out, nor will the enemies of truth live to see the scriptures perish. No, the *men* will perish, and the *arguments* that have stood in martial array against that book, while the book itself is destined to outlive all the nations, and will be in the hands, and deeply impressed upon the heart, of that last believer who shall rise to meet the Lord in the air. This great luminary of the moral world, will hold its station, and shine on in all its glory, and lighten and warm the beings it was sent to cherish, till the elect are all gathered in. Every doctrine of that book, will outlive its foes, and will be embraced and loved, by every believer that shall be sanctified through the truth. Wisdom is justified of her children. There is no danger, nor has there ever been, that any one

doctrine of the bible should be lost. No power but that which can build a world can stop truth in its course, and that power *will not*. Bury in one common grave every bible that has ever been published, and let them lie till their mortal parts perish, still their doctrines, like so many imperishable gems, shall resist corruption, and emerge unhurt from the embers of the last conflagration.

By being controverted truth increases its lustre. The attacks made upon the doctrines of the reformation, gave them currency. Men would risk their lives, to see that book, which was so much the dread of some of the ruling powers, especially the powers spiritual. Thus the eyes of a blinded world were opened the more effectually upon the glorious gospel of the blessed God. And all the efforts that have been made since then, or that may be made against the truth hereafter, have had, and will have but this one effect, to establish it friends, in the more perfect belief, and the more full enjoyment of the precious bible.

Truth is in most danger when its foes are asleep, for then its friends sleep too. "While the bridegroom tarried *they all* slumbered and slept." To drive his people to their post, God sometimes gives their enemies a temporary triumph: never however leaving it doubtful in the eye of faith where victory will rest. When infidelity threatened to deluge the world, God raised up a standard. And when it crept within the pale of the churches,

(“ As when a prowling wolf,
 Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
 Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve,
 In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,
 Leaps o’er the fence with ease into the fold ;
 Or as a thief bent to unhoard the cash
 Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
 Cross-barr’d and bolted fast, fear no assault,
 In at the window climbs, or o’er the tiles :
 So clomb this first grand thief into God’s fold ;
 So since into his church lewd hirelings climb.”)

an eye divine watched all its movements. And its defeat is now as certain, as when it libeled the entrance of the grave yard, and daringly proscribed the Nazarine. God can recognize his enemies under whatever vestments they may conceal themselves. It requires only common faith to predict, that the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ will not long harbour in their communion errors that dethrone their Master. In the present and in every future conflict, the result will be as in the past. God will not suffer a flood of error to pour in, mightier than the standard he will lift up against it. He will continue forever to be the friend and advocate of truth, and should the time again come when he must blot out a world to recover its influence, he has all his stores of wrath ready. Do you still ask me, “ What is truth ?” I answer,

FINALLY, *Truth is that against which an impenitent world is armed with objections.* I mention

this characteristic of truth because many conceive, that nothing can be truth that meets with opposition. They act on the false supposition, that the world is friendly to truth, will readily embrace it when distinctly seen and will object to nothing that is truth. Hence if they hear a doctrine objected to, in the belief of which they have been ever so well established, they feel it to be their duty to doubt its truth. And yet there is no doctrine against which there may not be brought a variety of objections. In the affairs of common life it would not answer to act on this principle, else we should believe nothing. There stands a tree by your door, and you affirm that it grew there. I object to your position, first, that such a mass of timber could never rise to such a height without hands; secondly, that earth cannot produce wood, as every effect must have the nature of its cause; and thirdly, the tree was never seen to grow. But do you doubt whether the tree grew there, because I have offered three objections to your faith? And if I could offer thirty, instead of three, would it shake your confidence? Then why are the precious doctrines of the gospel to be yielded on the first attack?

The fact is, and it is a fact that we ought to know, the truth is far more likely to be assailed with objections than error. There are more who are engaged in opposing *truth*, than *error*, perhaps ten to one. None but the true believer finds a real interest and a real pleasure in supporting the truth,

while the great mass of ungodly men are strongly in the opposition. Hence all those whose hearts are at enmity with truth, are engaged, and have been ever since the apostacy, in fabricating objections to truth, while very few have endeavoured to meet these objections with a proper answer.

And moreover when objections to truth have been invented, there are *ten* who will circulate them, where *one* will make the same sacrifice to disseminate the truth. Hence when a book or pamphlet full of error leaves the press, many because they hate the truth will purchase it, and give it circulation, but if there follow it an able answer, there will be few, perhaps none, who will make a similar sacrifice. Christians *should not be so remiss*, but it was long since declared, that "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." The fact then must be that *ten* will become familiar with objections to truth, where *one* will hear those objections answered. Against the truth then there will stand more objections than against error, hence a doctrine strongly, and frequently objected to by unbelievers, has presumptive evidence of its truth. And perhaps in a world like ours, truth has no test more infallible.

We shall be sadly mistaken however, if we suppose that a mere profession will make men the friends of truth, and that all is error to which those who make profession are opposed. It not unfre-

quently happens that truth finds its bitterest enemies within the pale of the communion, and even in the sacred ministry. As there was a Judas in the apostleship, so in the gospel ministry there are men, O that it were not so, who bend all their energies to betray the design and to pollute the honours of their Lord.

But let us apply the rule. What doctrines are constantly assailed by unsanctified men? What doctrines are the drunkard, the liar, the profane, the swindler, and the sabbath-breaker, ever prepared to repel? What doctrines has it been considered improper to preach, because of the numerous objections that stand against them, and which are supposed to destroy their usefulness? Ascertain these facts and you learn what is truth. I close with

REMARKS.

1. *We see why the bible in all its parts is so entirely harmonious, and has so long continued in use.* Writers so numerous, and so separated as to time, place, education, and habit, could not have written so harmoniously, but from the fact that they all wrote truth, and nothing else, and truth is consistent with itself. And if the sacred volume by divine direction should be continued, and an additional prophecy or epistle be written in every future age down to the last day, they would all agree. Each under the guidance of the Holy Ghost would write only unadulterated

truth, and truth is consistent with itself. Hence the word of God, unlike every other book, can never thwart its own track, and can never become obsolete.

2. *We see why no other book can outlive a few short generations.* All others, although containing some truth, contain also error sufficient to bring them soon into disuse. Error is ever transitory. Let a book have been written if you please in the first age of the world, be it inspired or not, and let it contain nothing but truth, and that truth important, and it shall be fit for use till the funeral of the world, and shall be new and interesting to every succeeding generation of men. The character of God is pledged for the security of truth, and nothing else. It is as old as God, and will have a being commensurate with his. Its very nature is eternal. Truth is the reflected image of being and of fact. Hence ever since there was any being or any fact, and while these endure truth must live. But error has attached to it no such immortality. Perhaps it would not be saying too much to assert that every uninspired volume, has attached to it error sufficient to sink it sooner or later into the grave.

3. *We are now prepared to say, that one cannot reject the truth and be innocent.* The marks of truth are so visible, that one cannot mistake it but from choice. Its features are all prominent and visible,

and must be familiar to every man who has made a proper use of his eyes, and his understanding. Hence to not know the truth or embrace error is sin, and argues a heart unsanctified. He who loves God must wish to know and love the truth. Christ viewed the truth of such importance that he came into the world to declare the truth, and will now frown upon the man who diminishes its value.

It is absurd to suppose that truth has a character so doubtful that it cannot be known. If God has placed his statute-book in our hands, he will expect us to be familiar with the laws of his kingdom. He has not furnished us an unintelligible code. He has not suspended our destiny on a belief of the truth, and yet left it so uncertain *what we should believe*, that it is no crime to believe a lie. The Holy Ghost would not inspire for us a volume which we cannot understand. If God sanctifies his people through the truth, there is not the same hope that those are bound for heaven who believe a lie, as those who believe the truth. We cannot be sanctified through that truth which we do not embrace. Hence it would seem that it must be fatally criminal to reject the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel.

4. If the definitions which I have given of truth be correct, sinners ought to wish to hear those doctrines which they do not relish, and which fill them with distress, for none else are true. It would be easy to preach so as never to distress or offend im-

penitent men, but it would not be the gospel, and the preaching would be useless. They would sleep under it till they waked in perdition. They would neither quarrel nor repent. There are such preachers, and the effect of their labours is exactly what we should expect. Their "burden of the Lord" is a mere heathen morality, and the best effect a mere reform of some grosser vice, leaving the moral character unbleached, and the heart unchanged.

But it should be the wish of perishing men to hear another gospel, one that will alarm their fears, cut off their false hopes, arouse their consciences, and renew their hearts. It is pleasant to find that men are *pleased*, but far more important to find that they are *sanctified*. And those act a very weak part, who are conscious of impenitence, and yet prefer a gospel that is not truth, and can never point them to heaven.

Finally, the subject will help us to account for the stability of the christian character. It has its foundation in truth, the same that is the basis of the divine character, and of the throne itself of God. So the character of angels, and of all holy beings is built on the truth. Hence a holy character will differ as to its permanency, from the character of the sinner, as much as the truth differs from falsehood. Every christian principle is some truth of God, every grace some impress of truth upon the heart. Hence we expect the christian character, and no

other, to have permanency, unless that truth could become mutable on which it is founded. Christ styles himself *the truth*, and is that rock on which his people build their character and their hopes: "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Hence the believer, though "Kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation," has a permanency of character, from the fact, that God sanctifies him through the truth. He grows in grace and in the knowledge of the truth; and to whatever moral stature he attains, truth secures his standing, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Thus it is made certain that the saints shall never fall.

But we do not wonder that those who have no such idea of the permanency of truth, doubt whether the believer will assuredly persevere. Those who suppose him to build his house upon the sand, must fear, lest when the floods come and the winds blow, its foundations be removed, and it fall. But he builds upon a rock, firm as heaven itself, and we shall see him safe, when every other rock, but that which he makes his foundation, is melted down; and when those who have not built on Christ and on truth, "Shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,"

May God bless his truth, to the sanctification of his people ; and make them zealous to learn it, and to propagate it. May he give us a high esteem for our bibles, and sabbaths, and sanctuaries, and a preached gospel, by the aid of which we learn truth. And may he sanctify his ministers, and leave none of them to “ Depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” And may he through the truth glorify his own name, and prepare a great multitude, that no man can number, to worship about his throne forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON 12.



AN HONEST MINISTRY.

2 COR. IV. 1, 2.

“ Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not ; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

THE ministry of the reconciliation is an office peculiar as to its responsibility, its trials, its honours, and its enjoyments. We are placed in the office through the instrumentality of men, but have our commission from heaven. We negotiate a reconciliation between God, and a rebel world. Men are *saved* by our ministry, if we do our duty, if we are unfaithful they are *lost*. If we give them not the timely alarm, we must answer for their blood. We must meet our hearers in the last day at the judgment seat, and must know, when no mistake can be corrected, what has been the bearing of our ministry upon their everlasting destiny.

Hence we must do our duty, at the risk of interest, reputation, and life. Under every dispensation, the messengers of God have but one plain track,

they must hazard the danger of being faithful. Jeremiah might not withhold his message, when he must write it in a dungeon, when he must anathematize the monarch who imprisoned him, and when his message would impeach his loyalty, and his patriotism, and endanger his life. Paul must do his duty in the face of stripes, the dungeon, and the cross. To hope that we can fully please the holy God, who sends us, and the disloyal to whom we are sent, is a fruitless hope ; and none but the traitor will ask, whose pleasure he shall seek. If we had no interest of our own to risk, the honest man would aim to do his Master's honour. But personal perdition hangs over us, if we compromise the honours of our Lord. Men *should* be pleased with us when we do our duty, but men are not what they *should be*, else they had needed no gospel. The same depravity that prompts them to hate the government of Jehovah, renders them hostile to any conditions of peace, that will consist with his honour. Hence the minister of Christ, who cultivates a bending conscience, and is seen carefully providing for himself, at the expense of his Master, is of all men the most miserable, and the most contemptible.

But upon a ministry thus exposed, God has poured the highest honours. Not the gospel simply, but the gospel in the lips of men, he has pledged himself to use as the grand instrument of redeeming the world. "Now then we are ambassa-

dors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Not the very angels, who minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation, have a commission more dignified. We are workers together with God, in laying the foundation and rearing the superstructure of a spiritual temple, whose topstones are to be laid with shouting, Grace, grace, unto it !

And with the *responsibility* and the *trials* of the office, God has mingled not only *honours*, but *enjoyments*. The work is pleasant. To study divine truth, and proclaim the divine honour ; to be conversant with sacraments and sabbaths, with prayer and praise, is living, if the heart be right, hard by the oracle of God. And when the work is done, the *reward* is great. They that turn many to righteousness are to shine in the kingdom of their Father, and as the stars forever and ever.

The apostle in the context had been commending his office : had showed, by various arguments, that it was more honourable than a ministry under the law. The law he denominates the *letter*, the gospel the *spirit*. *That* was the ministration of condemnation and death ; *this* the ministration of the *Spirit*, and the ministration of *righteousness*. The *legal* ministration was *temporary*, but that of the *gospel* remains a *lasting* and *permanent* establishment. Hence Moses, conscious that he was the minister of a dispensation that would soon be eclips-

ed by one more glorious, veiled his face. But the heralds of the gospel may use great plainness of speech, as they proclaim a system in which there is nothing dark or mysterious. The true light has shined ; the veil is taken away, and we now behold the glory of God, not enveloped in clouds and darkness, but with open face as in a glass, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And while we gaze upon this brightness, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. And all is accomplished by the Spirit of the Lord, else the world had abode still in its native hideous darkness. Thus does the apostle, when he contemplates the dispensation of which he is a minister, rise to a tone of triumph, where language and figure are exhausted. Therefore says he, seeing we have this ministry, we faint not. The office is so dignified, that no trials shall shake our confidence, no onset subdue our courage. We will neither use dishonesty, craft, or deceit, but commend ourselves to every man's conscience, by manifesting the truth. Thus interesting is the attitude in which the apostle places himself, and all who after him should publish salvation to a dying world. Following the train of thought he suggests, I remark

I. *The mercy of God, qualifies men to be his ministers.* The very messengers he employs are by nature hostile to the truths and glories which the

gospel reveals, and to the temper and duties it enjoins. The character of God and of the Saviour displeases them. There cluster in the Godhead the very attributes that render character unlovely to the carnal mind. We naturally spurn the kingdom that God erects, and the heaven he reveals. All that was odious in the law, and more yet, we see in the gospel, till the eyes of our understandings are enlightened. It contains a law as rigid, as that which issued from the flames of Sinai, while it digs a *deeper pit*, and kindles a *more consuming fire* than were employed to avenge the broken law of Moses.

We are by nature like our hearers, the prey of a carnal mind, that is not subject to the law of God. Hence, till the grace of God renew us, how disqualified are we to be ministers of the reconciliation ! But of just such men, sanctified, he makes ministers. He forgives them, and loves them, and they are then called to plead with rebels, just such as they were themselves up to the hour of the new birth. They have but just quitted the standard of revolt, and lo ! they are seen standing hard by the host they have abandoned, proclaiming a pardon in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul had gone to lay waste that very church, which a few days afterward it was his honour and his joy to edify. The devourer was caught with the very prey in his teeth, and was made a lamb. The disciples were afraid of him ; nor can we wonder : a few days gone and he

was a fiend : and very much so of all Christ's ministers. We mingled with the congregation of the ungodly, and could resist the kindest entreaties of a pitying Redeemer. Not one of all the multitude had a conscience more polluted, or a temper more revolting. If grace has sanctified us, how surprising our escape. *Perdition* we deserved, but are made the messengers of life. What a humiliating retrospect ! One look behind, covers us with shame, cast we that look but through a little space. Then the overtures of the gospel, which we now proclaim, were like music to the deaf adder. Some of us perhaps were pressing on to perdition like Paul *in the very van* of that multitude which now it is our effort to save. On this point I hardly know how to say enough. We were " Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world : " We " walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. "

And we had a *mind* as *benighted*, as was the *heart depraved*. Whether the apostle had reference or not to the supernatural gifts, by which he and his fellows had become qualified to serve God in the gospel, we may well ascribe to his grace any small degrees of preparation in us for such an embassy. That gospel which it has become our duty and our delight to publish, little as we now under-

stand it, was once still less understood. The bible was a dead letter. Neither was the mind imbued with its doctrines, nor the memory stored with its facts, nor the tongue used to its dialect. It seems incredible, when we look as it were but to yesterday, and recollect how gross was our ignorance of the gospel, that we should now be the teachers of that same religion to the multitudes who are perishing as we were for lack of knowledge. But the grace of God furnished us the means of improvement, and poured in the few rays of light, covered as we still are with ignorance, by the aid of which light we are introduced into an office similar to that which once was filled by the Son of God.

But the grace of God was still conspicuous, else our *unworthiness* had debarred us from a situation so sublime and so honoured. Might we but have occupied the obscurest place in God's house, been only door-keepers, it had been more than we deserved. The shame of having been totally depraved, and the guilt of having stood in the ranks of revolt so long, the habits of indolence we had acquired, and the still remaining passions, and prejudices, and the whole catalogue of moral plagues, deep rooted in our nature—all seemed to forbid us the occupancy of a station so honoured. God has indeed committed the treasure of the gospel to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of him and not of us. How well does the language of the prophet become us. "Behold, Lord, I cannot speak, for I

am a child." And that of the apostle, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

And where is it that God has put us? Into almost the very same office once filled by prophets and apostles, and even by the Lord Jesus himself. He has emancipated slaves, and sent them to invite back a strayed world. He has placed us on the ramparts of his Zion, and has entrusted the prosperity of his kingdom, the honour of his government, the vindication of his law, and the glories of his name, to our sleepless, and watchful, and devoted fidelity. On our way to the place of execution, and the halter about our necks, he hailed us, and pardoned us, and now here we stand, between the condemned, and the arm of justice, between the burning glories of the Godhead, and the wretches whom his ire threatens to consume. We are occupying the station that Moses filled, while Israel were dancing around the golden calf; or that of David while he offered sacrifice on the threshing floor of the Jebusite; or that of Abraham when he sent up his last petition in behalf of the devoted cities—to turn away the wrath of heaven, to stay the plague, to ward off the storm of fire, and save, if it be possible the abandoned transgressor.

Connected with our fidelity, are the everlasting hosannas of a multitude that no man can number, or with our neglects, the weepings and wailings of the

damned. Ah, why did the holy God attach so high an office to beings so debased. Why did he not commission angels, who would have been faithful, and who were worthy of his honours. They would have brought no pollution with them, would have made no compromise of truth, would have exhibited no dire instances of apostacy, would have seen eye to eye, and might have gathered in the elect from the ranks of revolt, leaving wholly behind that multitude of hypocrites, who now pollute the ordinances of God. Well may we exclaim, "I am a worm and no man," and ascribe, with the apostle, our appointment to the work, and our equipment for it, all our success in it, and the reward, if any should be ours, to the grace of God.

II. *The ministry of the reconciliation is an office big with trials.* This we should infer from its very nature. We are the agents of negociation, between God, a holy and a good Jehovah, and men who hate his character, his government, and his glory. We preach a gospel which till men are sanctified they cannot love. We are directed to describe their character, in all its odiousness, and show that they have been unreasonable and vile, in every principle, and in every act of their revolt. We must warn them of a moment coming when all their sin and their shame must be uncovered. We dare hide from them no part of the truth, whether they will hear or forbear: must show them that not

merely is their conduct offensive to God, but every imagination of the thought of the heart, is evil, only evil continually. We must inculcate principles that violate every inbred sentiment of their hearts, and press maxims, and doctrines, and duties, that give their whole conduct the lie, and cover their whole character with guilt and pollution. We must assure them that, as God is true, it will be ill with the wicked in every stage of their being, and in whatever world God may place them. We must uncover the pit before them, must prophesy evil concerning them, must say loudly and fearlessly, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God, where their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched.

But it needs no prescience to feel assured that all this will not please. Men are not disposed to have their characters laid bare, and their hopes destroyed. The refuge of lies where they have taken sanctuary, they will not allow us with impunity to demolish. The god of this world persuades them that *he* is their *enemy* who thus beforehand brands them with the marks of perdition.

And while we are thus liable to offend, we depend on them for support. While every doctrine we preach, and every duty we urge, and every woe we announce, are at issue with the strongest biases of their hearts, we expect them to clothe our children, and fill our board with bread. While they are in the very act of doing us a kindness, we may

see them violate the law of God, and may be under the odious necessity of returning the favour with reproof.

Hence trials come as certainly as death. If we watch the interest we are set to watch, and cannot be bribed to perfidy, there will grow thorns in our path, and we shall wet our couch with tears. Hence the fact that the Lord's servants have been stoned, have been sawn asunder, have been tempted, have been slain with the sword, have wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, been destitute, afflicted, tormented. Hence the scenes of persecution that fill the pages of ecclesiastical history, the agonies of the cross, the fires of the stake, the inquisitorial dungeons, and the whole catalogue of plagues, that have borne off the stage the armies of the martyrs.

III. *This same ministry furnishes an antidote to the woe it generates.* It is, of all the appointments of the court of heaven, the first. The leader of Israel had a commission less dignified. He was the minister of a transient service, promulgated a temporary economy, was conversant with types and symbols. He released men from the chains of a human and temporary bondage, led them to an earthly Canaan, and built them a perishable sanctuary. But all these were the mere shadows of good things to come. Ours is the office, not of *typifying*, but of *substantiating*; not of *predicting*, but of nar-

rating ; not of breaking the bands of a temporary bondage, but the league with death, and the agreement with hell ; not of leading men to a paradise of hills and brooks of water, but to a city not made with hands eternal in the heavens ; not to a crumbling material sanctuary, but to the very throne itself of God. — Under the ministration we occupy, Sinai blazes not with wrath, but with glory, God is seen not through a veil but with open face ; “ Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

Such the office ; every trial is light. He who may fill the first embassy in a kingdom, will suffer any privations, will risk any dangers, will endure any trials, will submit to any hardships. He will traverse, with such a commission, the dreariest heaths, and the stormiest seas, will inhale in any clime the most polluted atmosphere, will live in the wildest solitude, with beings the most rapacious and bloody. And shall men endure, supported by the honours of a human embassy, trials, dangers, and death, without complaint, which the minister of the Lord Jesus, with the high hopes that attach to his office, cannot endure ? If insulted we think of our commission, and feel the inspiration of its honours, and instantly rise superior to shame. He whom heaven has commissioned, needs no human applause to animate him. “ He that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.” And what

if men do condemn, while God approves ? There lies an appeal from every human tribunal. To none of these lower courts are we amenable, in a sense that can excite alarm. Said an apostle, "It is a very small thing that I should judged of you, or of man's judgment." To our own Master we stand or fall. If our message does not please men, we have only to see to it, that it has not been altered in our hands, and, if not, take courage. When we can see affixed to every doctrine we preach the broad seal of heaven, we have no farther concern except, to inquire if we have chosen out acceptable words, and felt a right spirit. If to the book of instruction we add or diminish, the deed blots our names from the book of life, and brings upon our heads the plagues recorded. If men will not hear us, we have only to weep in secret places for their pride.

If to men it should seem that we urge them too assiduously, we have only to assure them that they must believe or die. The direction is, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Our stand is between men and the pit, and our business to stop them. If they now think us too urgent, they will curse our supineness when they have perished. Before we have done with them, they will know the truth of all we have said, and more yet ; and will wonder that we could believe it all, and proclaim it so coldly.

If men are angry, still there is hope. This may

be the first step to conviction and faith, and they may still be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. The gospel may produce wrath, and still may be a savour of life. The tenant of the tombs raved, and then believed. Our assurance is that Christ is able to bind the strong man.

But when we fear the worst, and have no hope that the miserable beings will live, whom we would warn and waken, still we may be to Christ a sweet savour, though it be of death unto death. Christ has not suspended our *reward* on our *success*. He will provide for his ministers who have dared to be faithful, though the whole population of the apostacy should go in a mass to perdition. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord." For the *faithfulness* of our ministry, not for the *effects*; for the good *we intended to do*, not for the good *we have done*, shall we be tried in the last day. If the Lord has made us rulers over his house, to give them their meat in due season, blessed are those servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. And he will soon return. In a few days we shall have his decision upon our conduct, and till then it is of small importance what is human opinion respecting us.

Thus the godly minister takes courage. If our toil be hard, we serve a good master, and the period of rest is nigh. If we should even faint and die under the fatigues of the service, still we can die in no other circumstances so honourable. If our present

privations are many, and our joys few, there is just before us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If the corner of the vineyard where we labour is unpromising, still we know that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. We have only to fill the place appointed us, as God shall give us ability, and for what remains he will provide. Do we but cast our seed corn upon the moist field, we shall see it after many days. Should the seed lie buried in the dust till we are in heaven, we may still see the fruit of our toil. Thus our commission so presents its consolations in the time of trial, that we may well say with the apostle, "Having this ministry as we have received mercy, we faint not."

IV. *The text prescribes that open and ingenuous conduct, which it is the duty of Christ's ministers on all occasions to exhibit.* Let us notice them

1. *In their daily walk.* The apostle says of himself and his fellows, probably in allusion to the intrigue and duplicity of the false teachers, "That they renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and did not walk in craftiness. He does not mean to imply that this had ever been their course. They had, from the period of their vocation to the apostleship, refused to reach any point of enterprise, by deception and fraud. Even when Paul says of himself, that on a certain occasion, being crafty he

caught them with guile, he is thought merely to have alluded to the language of his enemies.

The ministers of Christ have nothing to hide, have no budget of secrets, and may say and do nothing, that is inconsistent with simplicity and godly sincerity, either in their social and commercial transactions, or in connection with the functions of their office. The world will doubt, if we show duplicity in one case, whether we are sincere in any case. If we can smile complacently upon the man we would betray and ruin; if with one hand we can embrace, while the dagger is fast held in the other; can *sooth*, and *flatter*, and *hate*; men will have no confidence in us when we thunder the anathemas of the law, or breathe out the counsels and the accents of mercy. If it cannot be said of the minister of Christ, that he is a sincere and honest man, nothing can be said of him that does not put the whole brotherhood to shame. The man may be able in theology, and in oratory, may be a profound general scholar, may have made the multitude bow to him, but if he be, to adopt a very homely, though a very significant figure, a two-sided man; if his assent and his smile, are not tokens of approbation, and we may fear he will betray us, when pledged to serve us, then has he not renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and will be as readily suspected of insincerity in the pulpit as by the fireside. Heaven's ambassador must exhibit, in his countenance, and on the face of his whole deportment, the simplicity of the man of

God. The veriest wretch with whom he has intercourse, ought not to doubt for a moment his honesty.

Toward his ministerial brethren duplicity is doubly odious. We are but distinct agents attached to the same grand embassy, and sent to make overtures to the same disloyal multitude. When we have no trust in each other, the foe is strengthened, and our defeat and shame sure, and the least approximation to duplicity destroys confidence. We may differ in shades of doctrine, and points of duty, and still if honest men, may cooperate, and there may be in the general embassy an efficiency and a unity, that shall pour honour upon Christ, and shame upon the adversary. We must have confidence in each other's prompt and cordial cooperation, or the world we have come to sanctify, will be strengthened in every deadly and desperate principle of revolt, and will sleep on till they are waked by the terrors of the last trumpet.

The motives to such a confidence are obvious. Our trials and, our enemies are numerous, and are the same, and the same our joys and our friends. We serve the same Master, and hope for the same heaven. Without an asylum in each others bosom, in this outcast world, where we find so rarely an honest friend, we should be the loneliest of all flesh. No union can be more sacred. There is not only christian sympathy, but the fellowship of office. There belong to the sacred ministry special hopes

and promises. In what relationship do the hidden things of dishonesty wear an aspect so monstrous, or wage a war so cruel, as when they disturb the intercourse, and break the compact, that binds together the ambassadors of the Lord Jesus. One would sooner lose confidence in his mothers children, and betray his offspring, than see marred the fellowship of the divine legation. That Jesuitical fraud, nicknamed *pious*, so long current in the church of Rome, is the worm that now devours that polluted community. May it go with its foster mother to perdition, and never find a lodgement in the bosom of Christ's ministers. Let us notice the minister of Christ

2. *In his official capacity.* While the apostles renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and would not walk in craftiness, *so neither would they handle the word of God deceitfully.* They would not, nor may we, hide, misrepresent, or leave out of view, any truth meant to be conveyed to us in our book of instructions. The ambassador of Christ resolves, that the bible in all its plainness and simplicity, shall be permitted to pour forth its precepts, its doctrines, its denunciations, unadulterated, upon the congregated multitude of the ungodly. To inquire, what is pleasing, and what is popular, and what is safe, belongs only to the traitor, who would make a kiss the signal of arrest.

We may choose out acceptable words, may watch for the best moment when to press an unwelcome truth : this is duty. And in illustrating truth we may put to use all the softness and sweetness of language and figure that is possible, still no truth may be covered up or mistated. We may say to the righteous, it shall be well with them, but we must with equal plainness say to the wicked, it shall be ill with them. He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. We may dwell upon the glories of heaven, till we, and all about us who believe shall long to ascend, but we must also raise the covering of the pit, till the ungodly if they will not repent, shall begin to feel the scorch of its torments. He who would not handle the word of God deceitfully, cannot suffer his unregenerate hearers to choose what doctrines he shall preach, or what duties he shall urge, or what follies he shall spare, or what the fervency of soul he shall breathe into his message. If he believe a doctrine, he will not hide his faith ; if there prevail an error, he dare not conceal his dissent ; nor against any vice, however popular, can fail to bear his prompt and unequivocal testimony.

The minister of the gospel, *who conceals his faith*, is a traitor, and goes over soon to the enemy. And while he stays he is a plague and a nuisance. " If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle." Why have a plain and pungent and intelligible bible, and put it into

the hands of a crafty ministry, to be neutralized, and tamed, and mangled, before it can reach the conscience? As well may the *bible* be a *riddle* or a *dream*, as the *herald* a *knave*. He can fritter down its doctrines till the whole book is a mere ballad. A people with such a ministry are in a case as pitiable as the wandering Tartar.

V. *The text instructs Christ's ministers how they may best commend themselves to the consciences of men. By manifestation of the truth.* To be useful we must have an advocate in the conscience of the people. Many may not relish the doctrines we deliver, and may hate our faithfulness, but there may still be, and there must be the conviction, that we are honest men, who act with reference to the judgment. In such a case one may be useful, even to the men who cordially disrelish the whole testimony of God. They may kindle with rage at the juncture when the truth has found an avenue to the conscience.

And this ascendancy is gained by an undisguised exhibition of the truth. When men see, that we dare not go beyond the word of the Lord, and that we dare say all that God has bidden us; that we feel ourselves fast bound by the letter of our commission, then the conscience of our people, if well enlightened, will take part with God, and do homage to our integrity. They may wish that we would alter somewhat the message we have receiv-

ed from heaven, may even demand that the point of truth be blunted, may refuse to attend upon a ministry that handles so uncereemoniously their passions, their practice, and their prejudices ; but if we comply, we lose their respect, and their judgment denounces us contemptible hypocrites. They would rejoice to be successful, but the moral sense would reprobate us. While men writhe under the thrusts of truth, they yield the highest homage to the man whom no bribery can corrupt, who can be contentedly poor and homeless, but cannot be treacherous.

The American ambassador at some foreign court, may give offence, by pressing our claims ; but should he violate his commission, and compromise the honour of his country, and the rights of his constituents, he would lose all respect abroad and at home, and sink into deep and lasting contempt. Let it be seen early that no threat can scare us, that no bribe can buy us, that no considerations of ease, honour, or affluence, can for a moment put our integrity to the stand, or bring us to yield an inch of the territory of truth ; thus we give evidence that we have a conscience, and the enemy will be afraid that God will protect us. Men suspect in this case, that our message is true, and fear that their obstinacy will undo them, and, feel as they may, they yield us respect. Here that divine maxim is verified, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." The most contemptible of all men, is the

man, who holds this high commission, but employs his talents to lower down the terms of reconciliation, to the wishes of the unsanctified. He will stand yoked with the wretch who betrays his country, and goes over to be hated and despised in the camp and country of the enemy. But the man who is true to his Lord, who sacredly adheres to his commission, should he not be favoured with any very signal success, may be respected, and happy, and safe.

Finally, the apostle and his brethren felt themselves urged to faithfulness, by the consideration that God was present. Commending ourselves to every man's conscience *in the sight of God*. It was the last promise of the Lord Jesus, "Lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world?" The remotest idea of compromising the truth is immediately known to God, and is peculiarly provoking. All sin is committed in his presence. But of all sins, how flagrant and daring is the crime of deliberately altering the message he has given us to deliver to a rebel world! If we are faithful he is present to comfort and support us, but if we shrink, through the fear of man which bringeth a snare, he is present to despise and reprobate us. Hence let this be our motto, "Thou God seest me;" and let us live and die under a solemn impression of this truth. Let us have a character and exhibit a conduct upright in his view. Then the gospel we preach will be to us a savour of life unto life. The allseeing God

will watch us till we die, will guard the slumbers of the sepulchre, and will raise us to enjoy his smiles forever.

How delightful the thought, when slavish fear has not chased away hope, that we minister in the very presence of our Master. If we are in our study he is there, or on our knees he is there, or in the consecrated pulpit he is there ; to know our embarrassments, lay our fears, raise our hopes, and pour consolation into our hearts. From what duty can we shrink, of what foe be afraid, by what sufferings be disheartened, while we serve a God at hand and not a God afar off, and may at any moment roll over our cares upon One who careth for us. He who had not rather be a minister of Christ with all its trials, than wear a crown, knows not the pleasures of the service.

REMARKS.

1. *The subject is very humiliating to Christ's ministers.* We enter the office by mere sufferance. We were under a sentence of condemnation, and any thing short of perdition is mercy, and yet so honoured ! Hence no position becomes us but that of the most complete prostration of soul. Our appropriate prayer is. " God be merciful to me a sinner." From no station of usefulness, enjoyment or honour, can we fail to look back to the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit

whence we were digged. None were more unworthy of the office than we, none more richly deserved perdition, or if we reach heaven will celebrate our escape from death in sweeter Alleluias. How free, how sovereign, and how rich the grace that could raise such beings to a station so distinguished !

2. *The subject will help us to judge, who are the true ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ.* They have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, do not walk in craftiness, nor handle the word of God deceitfully. In the aspect of their whole moral deportment there is seen the open ingenuousness of truth. When they have known the mind of God they dare divulge it ; they dare, even if the message be unpleasant. If faithfulness should endanger their interest, offend their benefactors, cut off supplies from their table, and make their children barefoot and houseless, still in their message will be seen the truth, the whole truth, the truth simple, and unadulterated, as it dropped from the lips of Jesus. If they must be lodged in a dungeon, and see kindled the fires that are to consume them, still supported by his presence who said, " I will never leave thee," it is presumed you would see associated with their rags, and their wretchedness and martyrdom, a soul too honest to betray the truth.

But we see occasionally the opposite of all this. The man presents himself in the attitude of Christ's minister, but makes it his great object to accommo-

date his message to the taste of the poor dying creature whom it should be his object to awaken and sanctify. He believes many a doctrine, and reads many a precept that he dare not urge upon his people, and sees approaching dangers against which he dare not warn them. His first concern is to secure to himself the honours and the emoluments of his office, even should it require the compromise of the divine authority, and the divine glory. It grieves us to know that he is likely to perish himself, and his deluded hearers with him. And moreover he generates a contagion, that spreads like the plague through all the churches, and brings the reproach of the whole apostacy upon the men who have a less pliant conscience, and courage enough to do their duty ; producing a fastidiousness of taste, that prepares men to resist the pressure of truth, till they have reached perdition. And it should greatly grieve us to apprehend, that our children, when we are dead, may be thrown under such a ministry, may imbibe the contagion, may deny the Lord that bought them, may hate the doctrines that should sanctify them, and under the influence of a smooth and fair and popular religion, glide down gently and smoothly to the place of torment.

3. In a work so dignified, so responsible, and so perilous, we ought to expect the confidence, the affection, and the aid, of those for whose salvation this ministry is established.

It should secure us their confidence to know, that our ministry admits of nothing concealed and mysterious, but is open, undisguised and ingenuous. We spread before the people our whole commission, make our design known, and open to them our whole hearts. We are willing to earn the confidence we ask, and would say to the world, if on any point we betray your interest, believe any doctrine or credit any precept that we do not urge, or hide the danger that approaches you, then be distrustful and jealous, believe that we have run before we were sent, and that under the guise of the lamb, there rages the appetite of the wolf. If otherwise, we deserve your assurance. The office that God instituted, that Christ personally honoured, should hold a place very sacred, and very high, in your esteem.

I know there are sections of Christendom where the vilest of men, who do not deserve esteem, serve at the altar. But by their fruits ye shall know them. If they deal in the hidden things of dishonesty, or walk in craftiness, or handle the word of God deceitfully, you are not obligated to esteem them the ministers of Christ. And still it sometimes happens that a false and deceitful ministry is more popular than the one that Christ approves. It aims to commend itself *not to the conscience but to the unsanctified heart*. It prophecies smooth things, heals the wounds of the awakened conscience slightly, and assures the wicked that it

shall be well with them. It covers the pit over, and makes great efforts to lay the cry of alarm. The men whom you may trust, expose your danger, and depict your depravity, lead you to search your hearts, and try your hopes; and they deserve and need your confidence. They have trials enough, when their people rally about them, and confide in their integrity.

Let me say to all the lost, it is equally your duty and your interest to love the ministers of Jesus Christ. They come to you on an errand the most kind, and it may happen, and God may know it, that when they disturb you the most, they feel the most tenderly. When it has seemed to you that they must hate you, they have gone home and wept over you, and interceded with God in agonized prayer for your eternal life. So your child thought you cruel, when you tore the thorn from his wounded hand; but was you not kind?

One thing it is easy to know, he who so presses home upon your conscience the doctrines and duties of the gospel as to offend you, is not probably governed by selfish motives. His interest, *when no reference is had to the last day*, would lead him so to soften his message as not to give offence. You would then the more generously fill his board. Still when you find him unbendingly faithful, he deserves your esteem the more. Else you tempt him to betray your interest. When you move him from his integrity, he but goes down with you to the pit;

or if God forgive him, and he is saved, he may first have destroyed you and your children. Let him then be faithful and still have your affection, then his work will be pleasant, and your danger diminished.

And the ministers of Christ will also need your *help*. The enterprise in which they are employed is the redemption of men from eternal misery. And they have all the weaknesses of other men, and need, in a work so awfully grand, the prompt cooperation of all who value the soul. The seed they sow must be watered with prayer, their duties must be made easy by your friendship, and their trials be softened by your sympathies. When the burdens of the ministry are thus lightened, they are still weighty enough for the shoulders of an angel. Our constant exclamation is, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Next to him who in the very work itself has continued faithful unto death, the high reward of heaven will be his, who has aided our efforts, and has laboured with us in the gospel. If you could have helped in *building* the world, it would have been a service less honourable than that of helping to redeem it. It was built of *clay*, but must be redeemed with *blood*; it took its form in a *week*, but its redemption has been progressing these *six thousand years*.

You may contribute to save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins; may snatch a spirit that can never die from perdition, and elevate it to

a seat high in bliss ; may substitute the glories of heaven, for the darkness and horrors of the pit ; and change the wailings of the damned into anthems of Alleluia. By motives mighty like these, you are urged to ease the burdens of the ministry, to render the service pleasant and efficient, by your sympathies, your counsels, and your prayers. It is sweet to know that we have sometimes the entire confidence as well as the prayers of those whom it is our work to build up in the faith and purity of the gospel. It cheers the solitude of many a midnight hour, that we are preparing a repast for the disciples of the Lord Jesus, who when they have fed upon the word, will pray for him who published it. May every such prayer for us be answered, and then returned into your own bosoms, and when the lips are cold and the tongue silent that address you, and the sanctuary where you worship has crumbled, and other generations fill the places we occupy, may we be together about the throne, to sing and say, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed *be* his glorious name forever : and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory. Amen, and Amen."

Finally it is a crime of no small magnitude to treat with neglect or contempt a ministry formed after the pattern of the text. The embassy that God commissions deserves regard. He that receiveth you, receiveth me." If ministers are faithful, it is not at the option of their people, whether they

shall receive or reject their message, and treat kindly or otherwise those who hold the high commission of ambassadors of Jesus Christ. To their own Master they are accountable, for every doctrine they advance, every duty they urge, and the proper application of every promise they repeat ; and you too are obligated to insert that doctrine if true into your creed, to practice that duty, and apply legitimately that promise. If they deliver the true gospel, and you reject it, it proves to you a savour of death unto death. Even cold indifference is criminal toward that ministry which has immediate connexion with your salvation, and the eternal life of your offspring. God will punish those who treat rudely his ministers. We could point you to the places where sterility and death have reigned for half a century, when the hand had been raised against one whom God sent to them with the news of pardon. The law in Israel, " Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," has been renewed in other terms under the gospel. Blessed God, let no child of mine ever hurt or offend thy ministers. Amen.

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SERMON 13.



THE RICH BELIEVER BOUNTIFUL.

1 TIMOTHY VI. 17—19.

“Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

THE bible admirably adapts its instructions to every character and condition in human life, from the greatest monarch to the meanest slave. And this fact is an evidence that the scriptures are from God. They teach with an authority that men uninspired would not have been likely to assume. There is no crouching, no sycophancy, no flattery. Duty is taught to every man in the same style, with the same plainness, and the same assurance. What was said of our Lord, that he taught as one having authority, is true of the whole bible.

In the text Paul is directing Timothy what **he** must say to the rich. They may not be high-minded. *God* distinguishes one man from another. “In thine hand it is to make great.” They may not trust in their riches, for they are uncertain, and may take to themselves wings and fly away. They must trust alone in God, the living God, who giveth them

richly all things *to enjoy*. God suffers them to enjoy their wealth, but he also commands them to *communicate enjoyment*. They are to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. They must not even wait to be urged to this duty, but hold themselves in the attitude of handing out to others what God has put into their possession.

Thus they lay up in store for themselves a good foundation, a treasure upon which they may draw at any future period of want. Hence to be liberal renders them ultimately the more wealthy, and what is more important enables them to lay hold on eternal life. Thus their duty and their interest are united, and are equally plain. To do good with their wealth is an important means of bringing them to heaven. It is that test of piety which God will demand of the rich. Hence said our Lord, "How hardly do they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." We cannot then be kind to this large and respectable class of men, unless we urge them to liberality, as an indispensable test of their hope. They have some liberty of choice as to the objects they will the most liberally patronize, but may not choose whether they will or will not be ready to communicate, for if they will not, they can have no evidence that they shall lay hold on eternal life.

In proceeding, I shall present an object, which seems to me to stand among the first, and urge its claims upon a single class of the wealthy. Let me say, that *It is the duty of professors of religion, who*

have wealth, to consecrate their property to the spread of the gospel.

Ye disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, your Saviour has set up a church in this world, has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, and that she shall one day embrace all nations ; and calls upon you to consecrate your property to the diffusion of that gospel, by which he brings men into covenant with him and makes them happy. Will you hear me, while I offer five arguments, to induce you to obey him, in this reasonable requisition. I will enter upon the point without detaining you a moment, and when I have done, you must act as you think proper. I assert in the

I. *Place, that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," and hence that he has a right to make this draft upon you.* If I fail in establishing this point, you may lay down the book, and not read another line.

You acknowledge God as the Creator of all things. *Here I found his claim ;* it is prior to all others. He who built all worlds, and peopled them, and gave that people all their good things, may make a demand upon them, to any amount, within their power, with the certainty that it cannot be protested. His are all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. The same is true of your silver, your merchandise, your children, your servants, and all that you have. If not, then name the good thing that you can be sure will be

yours tomorrow. Begin, if you please, at the bottom of the catalogue of your comforts, and ascend, through the whole series, to the wife of your bosom, your health, and your life, and tell me, which of the whole will be yours tomorrow. Dare you name nothing? Then whosoever they are, they surely are not yours. For he who has nothing that he can hold a day, has nothing but what is borrowed. And if the good things you possess are not yours, they are the Lord's, or whose are they?

And what was the Lord's at the first, because he made it, *he has carefully watched over and preserved*. Not merely could we have *had* nothing, if God had not *made it*, but we could have *kept* nothing, if God had not *preserved it*. There is no kind of independence about us; we should have been beggars, if God had not cared for us. There was an eye that watched more narrowly than we did or could, or our wealth had long since taken to itself wings and had flown away. You will own, my christian friends, that it was the blessed God that watered your fields, and gave success to your commerce, and health to your children, that guarded your house from fire, and your lives from danger; else you would have been pennyless, or have perished years since. How many, once as rich as you, are now poor; or as healthy as you, are now in the grave; had a home as you have, but it burned down; had children as it may be you have, but the cold blast came over them, and they died. And

was it not the kindness of God, that saved to you what you have? May he not then lay a tax upon your wealth, as large as he pleases?

But I am not through the argument. God has never *alienated* his right. He has suffered satan to be styled the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air; but *he* owns nothing. The territories that he promised the Lord Jesus, if he would fall down and worship him, were not a foot of them his. And though men are permitted to hold under God certain rights, and which they sometimes term unalienable, still God never has, and never will, renounce his right to dispose at pleasure of all that we term ours. In a moment if he pleases, day or night, he puts us out of our possessions, and the places that knew us, know us no more forever. Hence we can serve God, only with what is his already, what he has never alienated. "Of thine own we give thee." Now that which God has put into our hands, and the right to which, he has never relinquished, we may not, without the charge of embezzlement, appropriate otherwise than as he shall command us.

But I have not done. *God has often asserted his claim to what we term ours.* Once he claimed the whole world, and by a sudden and fearful dispensation, displaced every tenant that had ever occupied its soil: providing afterward for the single family that loved him. And none will say that God went without his own dominions, to lay a world waste that was the property of *another*. When he burned the cities of the plain, he but asserted,

though loudly and fearfully, his right, and pressed home to the bosom and the conscience, of every foe and friend he had, his claim to be served and honoured, in every valley that he had made fertile, and by every people whom his kindness had rendered prosperous.

In the ruin of all the ancient monarchies, God is seen in the attitude of asserting his claim to the kingdoms of men, as sections of his own empire, to which he will send other rulers, and other subjects, whenever he shall please. The desolating pestilences, by which he has depopulated towns and cities, and the thousand nameless sweeps of death, written in our gloomy history, had all their commission from heaven, to take back the life, and health, and comforts he had loaned to men. There was one kingdom we read of, whose whole population, went seventy years into bondage, because their land had not been allowed to keep its sabbaths, and they had not paid their tithes, and emancipated their servants at the appointed Jubilee.

The storms that have wrecked our merchandize, and the fires that have devoured our cities, and all the misnamed casualties, that have ruined our fortunes, have been so many claims put in, by the rightful owner of all things, to what we had appropriated too exclusively to our own use. And the occurrences of every day are of the same character.

I know this is not the world of retribution, and that "No man knoweth either good or evil, by any thing that is done under the sun;" but let us not de-

ny, that God is known by the judgment that he executeth. Will he not, by repeated demands, keep men in mind, that they cultivate his territory, and feed on his bounty, and are happy under his auspices? In thus asserting his claim to be served with the talents that he loans his creatures, he teaches us that one unchangeable law of his kingdom is, that he never alienates what was once his own.

I shall not offend the good man, when I claim, that this has been a *disastrous*, because a *disobedient* world. Perhaps the aggregate of property, lost by the various calamities, that God has sent upon us, would have exactly met the claims he made upon our charity. Had that wealth been expended as he directed, it would have made the world wise and happy. “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” “There is that withholdeth more than is meat, and it tendeth to poverty.”

It is impossible to say, how much more prosperous this world might have been, if men had expended their wealth as God would have them; how much more frequently the showers had fallen, or more genial had been our sun, or more gentle our breezes, or mild our winters, or fertile our soil, or healthful our population, if we had been a better people, and had served the Lord with our substance. His promise must have failed, or he would have fill-

ed our barns with plenty, and caused our presses to burst out with new wine.

As the churches shall wake to their duty, and give the world the gospel, I hope, and if infidelity scoffs, still I will hope, that much of the curse will be removed from this illfated territory, and God kindly stay his *rough* wind, in the day of his *east* wind. How many of its plagues will be cured, its wars prevented, its heaths made fertile, and its earthquakes stilled ; and what the amount of blessings bestowed upon this poor world, when it shall become more loyal and more benevolent, none but God can know.

I cannot believe, that when we shall do as he bids us, he will so often rebuke us. When we cease to waste his goods, he will allow us to continue longer in the stewardship ; when we shall be faithful in the few things, he will make us rulers over many things. If you will now consider me as having established the divine claim, to you, and all that you have, I will proceed to say

II. *Christians who have the means, should contribute to disseminate the gospel, because they are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.* They belong to that kingdom which the gospel was intended to establish. This fact is quite enough, to give the cause I plead a strong hold upon every pious heart. Ye disciples of the Lord Jesus, read for once the charter of your hopes, and while it warms your heart, tell me if you have done half your duty. "All

things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Thus it seems God and his people have but one interest. Hence when he commands them to spread his gospel, he but bids them buy themselves blessings, bids them foster their own interest, and make their own kingdom happy. The christian has by his own act identified his whole interest with that of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. If God is honoured, he is happy, and God is honoured in the salvation of sinners, and in the joy of his people. Hence God can command his people to do nothing, but that which will bless themselves.

Now when did you know a king's son, who would not joyfully expend his father's treasures, to enlarge, and strengthen, and beautify the kingdom to which he was heir? He thus polishes his own crown, and blesses his own future reign. What believer has not the same interest that God has, in lengthening the cords, and strengthening the stakes of Zion? He is one of the little flock, to whom it is his Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. He is to be a king and a priest to God and the Lamb forever. And has he still an interest distinct from his heavenly father? And if not, he will hold all he has at the control of God, and will need only to know his duty and will act most cheerfully. A

III. *Reason why christians, who have the means,*

should contribute to disseminate the gospel is, that they must be merciful, as their Father in heaven is merciful. Over that mass of misery which the apostacy has produced their pious hearts have long bled in sympathy. And their charity is not of that kind that it can content itself with saying, “Be ye warmed and be ye filled.” They have read and have strongly felt, that cutting interrogation of the apostle, “Whosoever hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” And there is no man so poor, as he who has not the bread of life. The good man would render all men happy. His charity is warm like that which beat in the heart of the Son of God, and to do his duty is his meat and his drink. This makes him like his Master, and to this he aspires. He cannot hope to rejoice eternally in the achievements of redemption, unless moved by the same pit for the miserable that he felt, he is prepared to march up promptly and offer the Saviour any service he requires.

I appeal then, ye disciples of Jesus Christ, to the kindness of your heart, when I ask you to contribute to render the world happy by your wealth, Would you not cure some of the plagues that sin has generated, and that have so long preyed upon the happiness of man? Would you not quench the funeral pile, and save the young, and beautiful, but infatuated widow, that she may nurse her imploring infant, and live to rear it up to life?

Would you not free one half the human family, the female sex, from that servitude to which paganism has subjected them? Would you not snatch ten thousand infants from the altars of devils, where they now lie, bound and weeping, waiting till you speak a word of mercy for them? Would you not teach the vast herd of idolaters, that their is a kinder, and more merciful God, than those they worship? Would you not break in upon the delusions of the false prophet, and tell his misguided followers, that you have read of a holier heaven than they hope for? Would you not file off the chains, that have been fastened, so many centuries, upon poor afflicted Africa? Would you not stay the progress of war, and save from death the thousands, that are marching, wan and weary, toward the field of death? O, would you not, were it possible, bring back this base world to its home, and its Maker? Have you then a purse, into which God may not require you to thrust your hand, and take thence what he has there deposited, with a view to make this same world happy?

IV. *Bear with me, ye followers of the Lamb, and I will say again that you have covenanted to be workers together with God, in achieving the purposes of redemption, and must now employ your energies, to widen the boundaries of his holy empire, or forfeit your vow. It was in you a voluntary compact, and you pledged in that hour your prayers, your influence, your farm, your merchandize, your purse, your chil-*

dren, and all that you have. And heaven has recorded that vow, to be brought up against you, if it be violated, in the day of retribution. It was wholly at your option, whether you would enter into that sweeping covenant, whether you would swear, but you have entered, you have sworn and cannot go back. You then relinquished forever your personal rights, and have had ever since, but a community of interest with God and his people. Now God is employed in doing good, and his people too if they are like him. How then will it correspond with your oath, to stand aloof from the calls of the church? and disregard the command of God? and let the waste places lie desolate? and let the heathen die in their pollutions? and let the captives perish in their chains? and let almost the whole of that territory, purchased with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, lie still under the usurped dominion of the prince of hell? and let a whole condemned world, go on to the judgment, with all this blood upon it, unsanctified? Oh, how will your broken vows, rise and haunt you, in that day when the wealth you have saved, shall be weighed in the balance with the souls it might have redeemed.

Once more, and I have done. As you hope you have been sanctified, through the truth, you have some experience of the value of that gospel, which we urge you to promulgate. Once you were ignorant of God, and were unhappy. You were in

somewhat the same forlorn condition, with those whose cause I plead ; you had forsaken God the fountain of living waters, and had hewn out to yourselves broken cisterns, that could hold no water. And you remember that dark period. Your mind travelled from object to object, through all the round of created good, in search of enjoyment, and “found no end in wandering mazes lost.”

And there is a world of intelligent immortal beings, seen panting and weary in the same fruitless chase. It was the blessed gospel that arrested you, and saved you. Your heedless steps it guided ; your dark mind it enlightened ; your erring conscience it rectified ; your insensibility it aroused ; your hard heart it softened ; your selfishness it subdued ; your pride it humbled ; your wayward course it changed ; your covenant with death, and your agreement with hell it disannulled. And here you stand, redeemed, regenerated ; your whole character changed, and your final destiny altered, through the influence of the blessed gospel. The curse is removed, you are a child of God, and an heir of glory, and shall one day see the king in his beauty : *and the gospel has done it.* It has given you peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, a firm hope of heaven, and the soul-reviving assurance, that all things shall work together for your good, till you rise to be where Christ is, behold his beauty, and rejoice in his love forever.

Now the question is, whether you will contrib-

ute of your wealth, to save those who are perishing as you so lately were. I now plead with you by all that religion has been worth to you; by all the joys it has brought you, by all the woes it has cured, by all the hopes it has raised, and by all the transformation it has wrought in your character, and your condition. For what price would you return into the darkened, and dreary, and hopeless condition in which the gospel found you? For what would you barter away all the delightful prospects that open before you? and calculate on no more precious sacramental seasons? no more communion of saints? no more delightful hours in your closet? nor Pisgah-views of the fields of promise? nor fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? At no price would you part with these? Then know how great are the blessings which you have it in your power to confer, on those who are perishing for lack of vision.

Do you say, they can purchase the privileges of the gospel as you have? No, they will not. They know not their value, and will die in their sins, ere they will give a shilling for the light of the gospel. Not the whole of India, if it would save them all from hell, would support a single missionary.

Will God send them the gospel by miracle? No, he once did thus send it to the lost, blessed be his name! but he now commands *us to send it* to those who are perishing for lack of vision. We know our duty, and God will require it of us. Can we meet the heathen in the judgment, if we have done nothing to redeem them?

I will plead no longer, but let me tell you in parting, that when you shall see the world on fire, your wealth all melting down, and those who have perished through your neglect, calling upon the rocks and mountains, to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, and shall know that you might have saved them, there will be strong sensations. If you are saved yourselves, and this is doubtful if you are not anxious to save others, you will wish a place to weep over your past neglects, before you begin your everlasting song; and if lost yourselves, then indeed there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth forever. May Jehovah bless you, and dispose you to do your duty now, that you may hereafter lay hold on eternal life. Amen.

SERMON 14.



NOTHING SAFE BUT THE CHURCH.

DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 9.

“The Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”

WHEN God exhibits himself, as the portion of his people, we feel no surprise. He can be to them all they need, can gratify all their wants, and all their hopes. But what can his people be or do for him? How can they so rise in his estimation, that he shall style them his portion, and his inheritance? The God who has built a thousand worlds, who thunders in the heavens, and holds the stars in his right hand; can he value his people above them all! And yet this precious truth is prominent in the text, and is demonstrated, by the whole course of providential events, since the creation of the world. If that is the dearest to God *which cost him most*, as is often the fact in our history, then indeed there is an obvious reason for the truth of the text. Worlds took being at his word, and will perish at his bidding, but he redeemed his people with the life of his Son; hence his high regard for them. And hence a reason for all he intends to do for them in futurity. He will guide them with his counsel, and afterward receive them to glory.

Hence to God’s people the text contains a very

precious truth. God has selected from the works of his hands, as what shall stand the highest in his estimation, his redeemed people. Not that he has alienated his right to any thing. Every world that he has built is his, and his foes are his. But in his church he will take peculiar pleasure. He will employ all his energies, to make his people happy, and himself happy in them. This was his purpose when he built creation, and when fully accomplished, "The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

But there is a truth *implied* in this text of solemn and dreadful import. It makes worthless every thing in this world, but the church of God. And what is worthless is not safe. Hence I purpose to illustrate this doctrine, *There is nothing safe but the church*. My intention is to look at facts *ancient and modern*, together with *what God assures us shall transpire in future*; all going to show, that while God has always cared for his church, he never did place intrinsic value upon any thing else.

I. *I notice ancient facts*, When the world was built, it is believed to have exhibited to the eye of its Maker unmingled beauty; and would seem to us to have had intrinsic value. But it was only holiness that God valued. Sin entered,

"Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
'That all was lost.'"

There were then generated the thorn and the thistle, and the curse of God lighted upon every part of this creation. A holy God could set no value upon a world bereft of moral rectitude. It would not have been surprising, had he destroyed it, and built another, to be filled with beings who would obey his law, and be worthy of his kind regards. But his wisdom devised a remedy, and he set up in that apostate family a church, whose interest has ever since then given to every thing else its price. When the church increased, the world was valuable, and when it diminished, the world became in the estimation of God comparatively a pile of stubble.

Cast one look at the antedeluvian history. The church had dwindled to a point, and became at length embosomed in a single family. To save that family no pains were spared; but all else, men and things, except what was needed to feed the floating church, and enable his people to cultivate and stock the new world, perished. Wealth and magnificence had now lost their value. If God had pleased, he could have avenged himself of his adversaries, and still have spared that vast amount of wealth, which perished in their overthrow. But why do it? The treasures of the old world had ceased to be valuable, when the church was gone. Their innumerable cities walled up to heaven, and filled with precious things, were all swept away. How wonderful, to see Jehovah restrain the deluge one hundred and twenty years, after his purpose to destroy had gone out, till the ark was prepared, his long-suffer-

ing evincèd, and the happy family housed from the impending desolation ! This done, he collected into that house of safety all that was valuable, his little church and what they needed to sustain them during the solitary year, their food and raiment, and the materials for reanimating the new world. He could then smile at the tempest, and stimulate the storm. O how great is God out of his holy place ! How sadly unsafe are that people, and those treasures that have no connexion with his kingdom !

There was offered another argument in support of the same truth on the plains of Sodom. A branch of the true church had been located in that dissolute valley, and was at length in danger of being swallowed up in a gulf of depravity. The population was too wealthy to be wise, had too much of the meat that perisheth, to regard that meat that endureth to everlasting life. The Watchman of Israel, as he surveyed the devoted plain, saw his whole church in a single house, and what was his he saved, but swept away the residue. The abandoned population, their palaces, their gold, their merchandize, their flocks and harvests, their gaudy apparel, and all their guilty instruments of idolatry and lust, were in God's account of no value, were no part of his inheritance. The moment Lot was gone, the guard that kept the plain was called in.

It will not be denied that God could have avenged upon that guilty community his broken law, and still have spared their riches, but these had no value when his church had retired. If Lot or Abraham could

have been made more holy or more happy, God would have spared them the treasures he consumed. But he chose here to display his vindictive justice, and create them other and better comforts. All that in his estimation was valuable, he saved.

So in the land of Egypt, God collected his people into Goshen, and there spread a canopy over them, while he poured out his plagues upon their oppressors. Out of that little territory, there was nothing in all that idolatrous land, on which he seems to have placed the smallest value. Its population, having filled up the cup of their iniquity, and their monuments of grandeur, and skill, and oppression, were the merest vanity. The life or liberty of one believing child of Abraham out-priced them all. Hence over his precious fold he placed one hand, while with the other he wrote *Tekel* upon the walls of Egypt, and spread desolation and death through its fields and its streets. The plagues I know raged under the divine control: but they might destroy any where except in Goshen.

So at the Red-sea the surest laws of nature were suspended, for the deliverance of Israel; while the pursuing enemy seems to have been as worthless, in the esteem of Israel's God, as their beasts and their chariots. When the church had reached the Arabian shore, and the rear-rank was out of danger, God suffered the raging waters to find their level. He had saved his people, and there was nothing else to save. The Egyptian army were God's enemies,

and their overthrow an act of retributive justice, and while the tender heart bleeds over the grave of that illfated multitude ; we are not forbidden in the midst of our tears, to reason on the palpable insecurity thus shown us of all but the church of God. He would open a path through the deep for his people, but would not employ his power to hold back the sea a moment longer than the safety of his church required.

So the Amorites and Moabites melted away in their contests with Israel. And the Canaanites, when the family of Abraham needed their lands, were the merest stubble, and the breath of the Lord consumed them. They cried to their gods, but they perished in the midst of their devotions : their idols could not save them. There even went out in behalf of Israel this edict, "The kingdom and nation that will not serve thee shall perish." Thus the world was taxed for the benefit of the church. Nations held their existence on the sole condition, that they should be found useful to Israel, and perished when God ceased to have need of them. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee."

Now as we travel down the tract of ages, we shall find constant illustrations of the fact, that God values nothing else but his church. This one interest, as far as God has been seen to operate in this world, appears to have engrossed his whole care. The church is that monument which has stood and told his glory to every new-born generation. Other kingdoms, rapid in their rise, and dominant in their power, have gone rapidly into oblivion, and heaven

has kept no very careful record of their obsequies. The Assyrian, the Medo-persian, the Grecian, and Roman empires, with all their multitudes, their wealth, their science, and their military prowess, have perished in the wreck of time ; while through all these periods not a promise of God to his people has failed, nor a pious hope been unaccomplished. The little stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, has become a great mountain, while the rock, from which it was hewn, is seen to crumble and perish. Empires dazzling in the eye of man, but inimical to the church of Christ, were worthless in the esteem of God. Their proud statues, their triumphal arches ; their mausoleums, their heroes and their gods, he swept away with the besom of destruction. Baal, Dagon, Moloch, and Jupiter have perished, with their hosts of worshippers, while not a saint has wept unnoticed, nor a prayer remained unanswered.

Not for one moment has God forgotten his covenant, while he has thus swept away from time, and from life, whatever that covenant did not include. In that darkest hour of Israel's history, the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, God loved and comforted with his presence ; felt all their oppressions, reprov'd kings for their sake, put their tears into his bottle, and minuted all their wrongs, that he might apportion to each, in the coming life, his appropriate weight of glory. And the archives of heaven can never be lost. The history of every suffering believer is written as with the point of a

diamond on a rock, and will remain legible in the day of retribution.—

But I must return from this digression. I am giving you the sad history of what was *not* the church. There came a period when Jerusalem changed its relationship to God. The church's light went out, and the religion of the sanctuary was reduced to unmeaning and polluted ceremonies. The house of prayer for all nations, became a den of thieves. From that moment the interest which God had taken in the holy city and sanctuary was alienated. No longer would God be known in the palaces of Zion for a refuge. The people of Jerusalem had become as worthless as those of Moab or Edom. Then the moment was, that God could without regret see their city demolished, and the last stone of their proud temple thrown down. He loved his people, and loved Jerusalem, and the temple, while they were holy; but when the priesthood became corrupted, and the temple profaned, and the divine glory forsook the mercy seat, he then abandoned the consecrated spot, as being no longer a section of his inheritance, and suffered the hedges of his vineyard to be broken down. And he now cares no more for the holy land, than for other lands. If the time shall come again that his covenant people shall be there, walking in his statutes, he will build again the walls he has thrown down, and render Jerusalem a theatre of his glory. Up to that hour, Syria, and Egypt, shall be as sacred as Canaan; and the stones and dust of his temple be as uninter-

esting and unholy, as the ruins of demolished Babylon ; a place of dragons and of owls.

II. I come now to look at *modern facts*, expecting to find here the same testimony, as in past events, to the truth of the doctrine, that nothing but the church is safe. In the convulsions of our times, we have seen every thing placed at hazard, but the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every revolution demonstrates that God has no other interest in our world. In the past half century how low a prize has he set upon crowns and kingdoms. And the lives of armies, composed generally of ungodly men, how unworthy have they seemed of his case. The fowls of heaven fatten upon their bodies, and the soil is enriched with their blood. The thousands that fell at Waterloo, if impenitent, were in the estimate of heaven as worthless as the clods that covered them. But if there died in that murdered multitude a pious soldier, angels will watch his ashes till he rise, and God be more interested in the turf that covers him, than in the splendid monument that stands upon the tomb of the hero. An empire of his enemies is in God's esteem of more trifling amount than one obscure believer. The hosts that have died in the fields of modern battle, perished because the church had no farther use for them. Else that promise would not be true, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or *the world.*" And well may we ask with the poet,

“What are the earth’s wide kingdoms else,
But mighty hills of prey?”

In all this a believer will find no mystery. The bible and the Spirit of God have taught him, that nothing has intrinsic worth but holiness, and that God can place no value upon what is worthless. Hence he lets loose his winds, which go forth teeming with desolation. Navies are wrecked upon the reef, and cities torn from their base. Earthquakes spread the cry of death, and open a thousand graves at a shock. Kingdoms are shaken, and whole islands, with their wealth, and pride, and enterprize, sink into the opening gulf. The wealth of ages perishes in the twinkling of an eye, and with it talents, eloquence, wisdom, science, the curiosities of antiquity, and the close kept records of a hundred generations. All this time the promise holds to God’s people, “No evil shall come nigh thee.” Things are rich and splended in the view of men, which weigh nothing in the account of God. If one saint must share in the general calamity, him the Lord watches with his eye, supports him in death, and lightens the glooms of his sepulchre. But men who have filled up their cup, and the wealth that bought their perdition, all these God values at nothing.

The fact is, and no fact is more interesting, the world was built for the use of the church. Holiness only, and that which promotes holiness, are valuable. The walls and hedges of a vineyard, are useful while there are vines to protect, and may be burned

or demolished when the vines are withered. Kingdoms have been built and perished, and armies been congregated and slaughtered, to serve the interests of the church. Hence said the apostle, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Hence to Zion's interest bends every other, is decreed every revolution, contributes every storm, rolls every ocean, and flows every tide. Earth is barren or fruitful as her interests require. As on the whole kingdom of Israel it might not rain for two and forty months, when God's people needed the protection of a judgment so long protracted, so may we presume that at the call of Zion's interests, God now withholds, or imparts blessings.

The amount of the whole is, that nothing has value, that does not contribute to advance the one interest which God has made paramount in this world. Royal blood, when the king is not his servant, is base and degenerate. The blood of David he watched with care, knew every artery in which it flowed, for he had promised to his seed the throne of Israel: but the blood of Saul became petrified in its channels. The blood of saints and martyrs is royal, the blood of prophets and apostles: for these he hath promised, shall sit on thrones, and wear crowns of glory that shall never fade. Thus are the passing ages gleaned of every relic that belongs to the saints, and when the gleanings are finished, the stubble is promptly consumed. The world is still

under tribute to Zion, as in the ages that have gone by, and we must leave it with God to say, whether he will relax the rigour of his requisitions, till all the nations have perished, and the redeemed are all brought home to heaven. I am to look

III. *At the events which God has assured us shall transpire hereafter.* If by the light of promise and of prophecy we look into futurity, God is still seen in the attitude of fostering his church, and overlooking every other interest. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord. Holiness to the Lord is to be written upon the bells of the horses, as if to teach us that nothing shall exist, but that which is consecrated to God. The highest offices of state are to become subservient to the interests of Zion. Kings are to be nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers to the church. It is evident, on almost every page of the prophecies, that Zion's interests are one day to absorb all other interests.

The world seems already to be shaping itself to become one holy empire under the prince of peace. I would be neither an infidel nor an enthusiast ; but would fear all that God has threatened, and expect all that he has promised. I read, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth ;" this promise I calculate will be verified. I read again, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God ;" this threatening I would fear. The wealth which men would not expend in blessing Zi-

on will perish in the using. Pearls worth each a kingdom, God intends shall be melted down in the last conflagration. When the church shall need their aid no longer, sun, moon, and stars will lose their fires and their light. The heavens and the earth which are now, as we are assured by the word of God, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. Thus I see the grand system consummated.

But through all these scenes, and even this last, God will be kind to his people. He will not usher in that period, till the last believer is sanctified. The orb of day will continue in full blaze, till the last pilgrim is lighted home. When Christ has opened the portals of everlasting life upon the rearmost of the ransomed multitude, then the lights of heaven will go out. Christ will wake his people, and bid them escape to heaven, before the last fires are kindled.—Thus *to the last* the church is safe, and nothing else. This one interest God ever made his care, and it will continue to be his care forever.

REMARKS.

1. If it should be objected to this reasoning, that there have been periods when the church, seemed *unsafe*, while its foes were *safe* ; it may be replied ; That the church still lives, and therefore up to this time *has been safe*, while every other interest has been placed at hazard. All the ancient foes of Zi-

on, who for a time seemed to prosper, have gone to their own place. Scarcely a trace of those kingdoms, which employed their power to destroy the church of God, can now be found. And her individual foes, unless converted into friends, have all perished, or we see them now on their way to perdition. On this point we have the direct testimony of God.

Moreover we have never seen Jehovah make bare his arm for the *destruction* of his church, as of her foes. He has often rebuked his people when they sinned, but they repented, and he forgave them. "In a little wrath he hid his face from them for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness he had mercy on them." Not so with their enemies. God has swept them away as with the besom of destruction. The storms of wrath came down upon them, and they did not repent till God had utterly *destroyed* them. It was not with them a temporary rebuke and then mercy, but an utter consumption. Thus the two cases infinitely differ.

2. If it be objected that the subject exhibits God as indifferent to the welfare of some part of the human family ; we reply, he will do none of his creatures wrong. The objection arises from viewing sin as a *calamity*, rather than a *crime*. If wicked men deserve only wrath, God, in destroying them, does right.

Moreover God offers all men his love, and a sure sanctuary with his people. If they will not

have him to reign over them, then God will appear gracious, while he provides for those who trust in him, and just and holy while he leaves all others to eat the fruit of their doings, and be filled with their own devices.

3. Let me suggest that, "All are not Israel who are *of* Israel." While we have thus celebrated the safety of the church, and have seen all else in danger, let it be remembered that it is the church *invisible*. If a false profession would secure us, the way to heaven would be *the* *broadway*. But when any section of the visible church became corrupt, it perished. A false professor is of no more value in the esteem of God, than an infidel. Judas and Julian had a seat among the disciples, but their ruin was none the less prompt and consummate. It is holiness that God values. When the Lord Jesus shall come the second time without sin unto salvation, if he find any of his people without the fold, he will save them; and if he find his foes within, he will recognize them, and send them away into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

4. The subject we contemplate shows us, that God is interested in every large or small community, more or less, as it contains a greater or less amount of holiness. Show me a kingdom where there are none of his elect, and with the word of God in my hand I can predict its destiny. It

will prolong its existence only while in some way it serves the church, and will then become extinct. But let a nation embosom a large body of believers, or let its energies be expended to serve the church, and it has the surest possible defence.

Hence all that confidence, which in times of political distress, we place in *men* and *measures* is a delusive trust. It is the presence of moral rectitude, and the prayer of faith, that render God a nation's Guardian. Yes, lovers of your country, fill our land with temples, and bibles, and truth; let it stand preeminent in the work of spreading the gospel; let our officers be peace and our exactors righteousness; and we are more ably defended, than we could be, by all the armies that were ever congregated, and all the navies that ever rode upon the sea. Nations may boast of their strength, and array their forces, but if they do not please God, and he despise their host, they fall an easy prey.

So in a *city* or a *town* where there is no holiness God has no interest. He will not care for our improvements in trade or husbandry, or take pleasure in our accumulated fortunes. By how much we subserve the interests of his kingdom, so will be the kindness he will feel for us, and the care he will take of us. Unless held in requisition for God, all we have is dross; "Our gold and silver is corrupted, and our garments are moth-eaten."

So in *churches* and *congregations* God has an interest, and exerts an agency in their behalf, exact-

ly in proportion to the amount of holiness found there. Let a church be very corrupt, and God will care but little for it ; let all its members, be holy, and it stands high in the estimation of heaven. Not in exact accordance to their numbers, are the churches arranged on the records of heaven. In many a case shall the last be first, and the first last. And it is not presumption to say, that God will apportion the visits of his mercy, to the aggregate of holiness that shall operate to invite down his gracious and life-giving influences. How forlorn then is the hope that God will grant seasons of refreshing, where there are none to pray ; and will give a new heart and a right spirit, where there is no house of Israel to inquire of him.

Still when men are the the most deserted as to spiritual blessings, God may allow them temporal prosperity. It is all the heaven he will give them. Men may prosper *most* when they are nearest destruction. The old world and the devoted cities were never more prosperous than when their last sun was rising. Men may be ripe for the sythe of death, their cup of iniquity full, while yet their fields wave with the abundant harvests, the atmosphere is fragrant with the odours of the ripened fruits and flowers, and echoes with the song of the cheerful labourer. Men often perish *the sooner* because they prosper. Riches increase and they set their hearts upon them. Any people who become

rich, faster than they become *holy*, have this very destiny to fear.

Inquire then, brethren in *Christ*, what is the extent of God's inheritance among you? This is a question which I feel willing to press upon your consciences with the weight of a world. Answer it and you have determined the extent of God's regard for you, and his care of you. The number of real believers, and the progress they make in holiness, are the facts that are to measure your consequence under the government of God. I know this thought exhibits wealth, and birth, and talents, as comparatively of little worth, and is *humiliating* as it is *true*. God is not attached to places and names as we are, but to holiness. The territory where the seven churches were, and even where the Shechinah blazed, God has forsaken: and he will treat you as he has others. He will never forsake you while you serve him, nor your children if they are holy, nor your seed, to a thousand generations, unless they forsake God. They that despise him shall be lightly esteemed; but let us draw near to him, and he will draw near to us.

This subject is calculated to comfort pious *families*. If we aim to render our children holy, God will build us up a sure house forever. The poor, family, who walk in the fear of God, he will consider more worthy of his patronage than a whole community of the profane and the proud. He will not command that house to become extinct where he

is feared and worshiped. The angels will pitch their tent there, and

“ What ills their heavenly care prevents,
No earthly tongue can tell.”

If God be for us who can be against us ? if he resolve to prosper and bless us, we and ours shall be safe, amid every storm that blows. No plague shall come nigh thee.

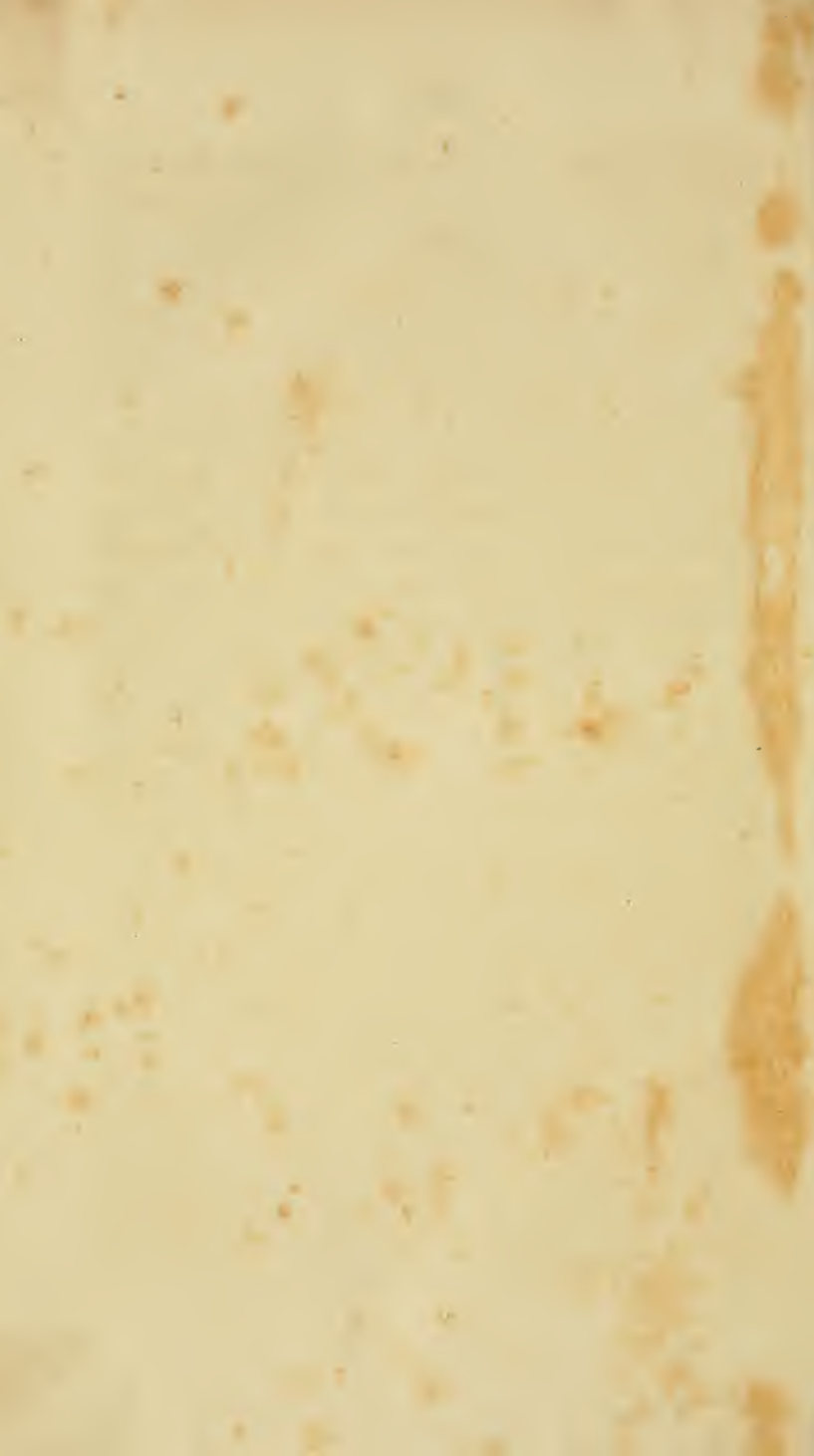
The *individual* believer may take all the comfort possible from this subject. No matter what his station. God regards the pious slave more than the impious master. The poor widow that can pray, and is happy in her closet, can do more to save her land, than the prayerless monarch. She can sit down calmly, and look at the gathering tempest, and ask her Father to manage and control its violence. We shall ever find that thought, so beautifully expressed by the poet, true ;

“ The soul that’s filled with virtue’s light,
Shines brightest in affliction’s night :
And sees in darkness beams of hope.
Ill tidings never can surprise
His heart, which fixed on God relies,
Though waves and tempests roar around ;
Safe on a rock he sits, and sees
The shipwreck of his enemies,
And all their hope and glory drowned.”

But finally the *ungodly* are not so ; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Shocking indeed beyond all description is the condition of

that man whom God does not love, and for whose happiness he will make no provision. He may, if God's plan permit, enjoy long the bounties of a gracious providence, but if God suffer him to live, and make him an instrument of his glory, it will all be no evidence that he loves him. And a day must soon come, when he will know his own character, and feel all the guilt, and shame, and misery of his condition. To be safe or happy, we must become a part of God's inheritance, and have a character that shall interest us in his love. The sinner then who will change his character, may wipe away his tears; but if he will continue impenitent and unbelieving, he is exhorted to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.







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